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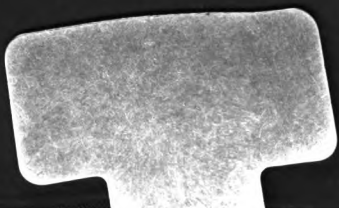
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RAVIGNAN
LAST RETREAT





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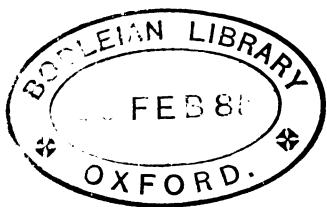
RAVIGNAN'S LAST RETREAT.

GIVEN TO THE CARMELITE NUNS OF THE
MONASTERY, RUE DE MESSINE, PARIS,
IN NOVEMBER, 1857.

Translated from the French
BY
F. M'DONOGH MAHONY.

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TO
THE SISTERS OF THE PRESENTATION
CONVENT OF S. JOSEPH,

CAHIRCIVEEN, CO. KERRY,

This Work is Inscribed

IN MEMORY OF LONG ACQUAINTANCESHIP AND
“AULD LANG SYNE,”

BY
THE TRANSLATOR.

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LETTER INTRODUCTORY.

J. M. J.



DEAR REV. MOTHER,—May the Grace of the Holy Ghost be ever in your soul !

Our Lord's mercy having granted us a few days' retreat under the guidance of Père de Ravignan, in the month of November, 1857, we thought that so precious a faith should not remain shut up in our Monastery, and we were eager to spread throughout our whole holy Order the same salutary fruits which it brought forth in ourselves.

To the care of a pious ecclesiastic to whom we entrusted the notes taken during Père de Ravignan's instructions, we owe the consolation of being enabled to realise our design. Permit us, Rev. Mother, in our gratitude, to recommend to your prayers this virtuous priest, who belongs to a congregation which

formerly deserved well at the hands of the Carmelites in France.

We ask you also for your prayers, and for a general communion of your pious community for the generous lady (already known by her charities in many of our houses) who is pleased to send, at her own expense, a copy of this pious Retreat to each of our monasteries. She hopes that all the religious will profit thereby, and will not forget to make a pious memento for her at the feet of our Good Master,—and that is her only ambition. Deign to make little Carmel, dear Rev. Mother, a participator in the same favour, and we beg to salute you with the greatest humility in the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary Immaculate.

Your most obedient Servant,

ST. MARIE DE LA CROIX,

R. C. I.

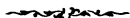
PARIS,

Feast of Mount-Carmel, *July 16, 1859.*

From our Monastery of Reparation to the Sacred Face of our
Saviour, of the Carmelites of Paris,

5 Rue de Messine.

PREFACE TO THE FRENCH EDITION.



THE discourses composing this Retreat were delivered by Père de Ravignan, three months before his death, to the Carmelite nuns of the Monastery of the Rue de Messine. They themselves, with pious care, gathered together the last apostolic words let fall from a mouth so revered. They thought they ought not bury this treasure in the earth, but ought rather share it with their Sisters in the different convents which follow the rule of S. Theresa, and with all religious souls, both in and out of the cloister, who love to feed on the holy teachings of evangelical perfection.

However faithfully and exactly they sought to reproduce Père de Ravignan's own words, it may be readily supposed that they have not always thoroughly succeeded. And even if they had, we must not wonder if we find in simple meditations, given by way of dialogue

to nuns, neither perfect harmony of style, rounded periods, nor great oratorical effect. All the editor's work has consisted in removing the unavoidable slips of easy and improvised dialogue ; nothing has been added, and but little abridged ; it would be a matter of scruple to go farther, and, by a desire for introducing numerous corrections, to expose oneself to alter, however little, the original ideas of the holy religious.

The only merit, too, that accrues to us is the highest recognition of Père de Ravignan's ordinary style in his pious discourses, in the following pages. Here indeed may be found that austere and simple, that grave and familiar language, and, without ever going in quest of eloquence, finding it incessantly,—the eloquence of inspiration,—at its purest and most exalted source, the love of God and men. There may we recognise the sweet unction of his words, the penetrating vivacity of his zeal, the manly energy of his faith, and his vast experience in ministering to souls. We hope still for better things, and we long for more ; if we take our food from these discourses, delivered for the sake of being medi-

tated on rather than for the sake of being read, we cannot escape the salutary contagion of apostolic zeal which penetrated that priestly soul, burdened in vain by the weight of a body worn out by labour and already on the threshold of the grave, with accents of sublime charity not of earth, but which the Seraphic Theresa seems to have inspired from the heights of heaven, as a last consolation for her beloved daughter, who can never see him more.

In this Retreat, Père de Ravignan, following his invariable custom, has not departed from the ordinary course of S. Ignatius' *Exercises*. The Exercises, as everyone knows, comprise a certain number of weeks and days, which the preacher can vary according to the needs of the congregation, or according to the time at his disposal. The word *day*, any more than the word *week*, does not necessarily signify, in the language of S. Ignatius, the interval of time which the expression is generally used to denote ; by this word S. Ignatius simply means a time, or a phase of the Retreat ; and the preacher, according to circumstances, can limit to one or more days the exercises of the

week, or can abridge or lengthen the exercises of the day. Agreeably to this power, Père de Ravignan confined himself to indicating, without giving them in detail, the exercises of the third day, while he devoted two days to the exercises of the sixth.

In addition to the meditations for the Retreat, we have given two discourses delivered by Père de Ravignan to the nuns of the same convent, which have been gathered together by them in like manner. Some fragments and ideas, collected from various sources, complete the volume.

PARIS,
Feast of S. Louis de Gonzagnes, *June 24*, 1859.

MEDITATION FOR THE EVE OF THE RETREAT.



BELOVED Sisters, you are entering on retreat, and the first thing you ought to do is to ask yourselves this question: What is retreat? What is the intention of our Lord towards us in giving us these holy and precious days? What is the intention of our Blessed Mother who looks down on us from the heights of heaven?

We find the answer in the teachings of the holy *Exercises*, as they have been modelled and bequeathed to us by the soldier of Maureze, who himself received them from the Holy Ghost, his first and only Master. Not a word has been changed in them since that time. In this golden book we find the conditions necessary to be fulfilled in order to profit by these holy Exercises; two words sum up everything under this head,—retreat

is the labour of the soul. The one with the other, the one by the other; labour by rest, and rest by labour.

And first, rest,—the salutary and wonderfully efficacious rest of the soul. Why? Because the first thing you ought to do on entering on this retreat, Sisters, is to cast yourselves into the hands of your Creator, like a block of clay, in order that He may remodel you; in order that He may work in your favour a new creation, a new being. “My God, create in me a pure heart, and renew the spirit of uprightness and justice within me. O my God, I give myself to Thee to do unto me according to Thy will.”

This offering must be made with the desire of forgetting the world, and of abandoning yourselves; it must be made with a generous heart. There must be no hesitating weakness,—no, Sisters, but great courage, because God requires much of us during retreat. What is it that God requires of you? You know not at the end of these holy days, and, in fine, neither is it the time to know. Later, the light will come. From this time until then, whenever anything causes you uneasi-

ness, or fear, you must banish it, because it would impair your rest.

This rest has still another element,—solitude. But are you not always in solitude? That may be ; but you need a more perfect solitude, a more absolute interior solitude by even separation from your customary occupations, and, above all, by the entire separation of yourselves in order that you may find God alone. Now, the solitude and the separation of retreat consist in the religious and conscientious observance of silence. Retreat is perpetual silence ; there must not be a word beyond what the strictest necessity requires, there must not be a voluntary thought to distract you from God. Be ye, Sisters, penetrated with this idea. Have nothing more at heart than the offering of all that you are to God, by silence and rest ; you shall draw therefrom marvellous fruits.

S. Ignatius says that retreat is more profitable to the soul than any other exercise to which she can devote herself, because, in retreat, the soul is exclusively united to God. Believe me, there is immense profit in the solitude of these days ; the world can still

penetrate behind the cloister and the gratings ; but in retreat there is a more complete separation than ever,—there is silence, calm, rest, certain progress.

We have already said, Sisters, that retreat is the labour of the soul. The soul needs exercise as much as the body, and this exercise, or labour of the soul, consists in examination, meditation, and contemplation, which prepare and dispose it to a second very important and very needful labour. At certain periods of our lives we require to reckon with ourselves, and to see if there is not in our soul some inclination, some desire, contrary to the rule of our holy vows, and contrary to what God expects of us. Then I stand in presence of myself, I reckon with my conscience, I weigh my inclinations, and more than once do I say to myself : “That is not right”.

When we discern our failings, and see what is not conformable to our holy state, we must immediately uproot and check our ill-regulated passions, and make way for the restoration of free will, in order to seek and to find the will of God for the reformation of our

lives. That labour is expressed in one word, you know it well,—victory over self.

Victory over self! it is a great word! victory over self—always! There will be always battles to fight and victories to gain. We must always recommence our lives, and let us, therefore, cast ourselves into the hands of our Creator, in order that He may remodel us. In Him, by Him, and for Him, we see what ought to be checked, and what ought to be practised; then, we are free to act with the light of understanding.

You must, therefore, be careful in retreat, and above all at its close, to devote yourselves to one thing,—to approaching God, and tasting of His favours. For the soul the all-important point is to reach God; if she becomes wedded to many things her occupations distract her from Him; she loses recollection, strength, and vigour; it becomes impossible for her to reach God alone.

But remember, Sisters, that prayer is everything. This labour of retreat is in the spirit of prayer; because, since we are bound to seek virtue and to check vice, we are bound above all to co-operate with grace, and to cast

ourselves into the hands of God. How can we do this? By prayer. Is not prayer the rest of the soul? Should we not seek in prayer peace and strength alike? You may then say with S. Augustine: "Thou alone art sufficient for me, O my God!" and again, "Give me, O Lord, Thy commandments, and command me according to Thy will!"

Retreat, then, in two words is, *Rest and Labour*. Rest,—separation, recollection, silence. Labour,—seeking the will of God, ascertaining the will of the infinite charity of Jesus towards us, and conforming ourselves thereto. You see that this labour and rest consist first in seeking God, in order that He may operate upon us; and, secondly, in destroying in ourselves everything that is not God. Sisters, enter on this labour with joy and generosity of purpose, and, believe me, you have much to obtain from it. Enter, too, on this rest with pleasure. Enter on it with Mary Immaculate, with your Blessed Mother, and, believe me, you shall draw therefrom lasting consolations.

RAVIGNAN'S LAST RETREAT.

FIRST DAY.

EXERCISE I.

MEDITATION ON THE END OF MAN.

“**M**AN is created to praise, to honour, and to serve God, and by this means to save his soul.” With this simple and profound truth, S. Ignatius opens his *Exercises*.

We can reduce this fundamental truth to two ideas. First, we receive everything from God; secondly, we are bound to refer everything to God, that is to say, to return everything to Him. When I say everything, I mean chiefly what is in ourselves,—spirit, heart, soul, all entire.

And we may first remark that we receive everything from God. Everything—good and evil, com-

fort and trials ; the holy indifference which does not make us estimate ourselves the more, nor desire one thing more than another,—everything comes to me from God, from whom is all my good.

We should receive everything from God with profound faith, we should believe sincerely that everything comes to us from God, that He has given us everything to draw us to Him, with no other end than Himself ; we should believe every day, at every instant, that He renews in us the benefits for which we were created, that He creates us anew for Himself alone.

Have I perfectly understood hitherto that I receive everything from God ? Do I approach God with this lively sentiment of faith ? And yet this sentiment should animate all my existence, it should be my life according to the words of the Apostle : *The just man liveth by faith.* To live by faith is nothing more than the firm conviction that we receive everything from God, and that everything ought to guide us to Him.

We should receive everything from God, not merely with lively faith, but also with entire dependence. God is the Master, and I am the slave ; I am bound to obey Him only, to serve Him, and to serve no other than Him ; is this what I have done ? Is this, then, my only object in everything,

to know God, to love God, and to serve God? Yet this is my end, and this shall henceforth be my life, at least I shall ask the grace to let it be so.

Secondly, Sisters, we are bound to refer everything to God. This is our duty,—my body, my soul, my existence, my whole self, health, sickness, worldly goods, pleasures, sorrows, poverty, riches,—I am bound to refer them all to God, and why? Because He hath given me all to this end. This thought should first inspire a feeling of gratitude within me. What happiness for a soul to say to herself: “I am bound to give everything to God, who Himself was the first to give me everything. Gratitude and praise be for ever to the good and great God!” To praise Him is a necessity for every creature, but for you, Sisters, it is more than that,—your mission is to give glory to God. Each one of you ought to say to herself: “My life must give honour to God. In my vocation, in my consecration, in my profession, I am bound to be of honour to God.”

Another sentiment most commendable towards God is respect. This sentiment embraces fear, but a fear full of love.

We are bound to respect God, to respect Him deeply, above all things, to respect Him as our Father; and then this outburst of filial fear escapes

from our heart : “ What, my God, Thou hast done everything for me, and is it possible that I could displease Thee, or offend Thee? No, my God, no ! ” Respect of God everywhere, always,—at the holy office, in holy prayer. How often do we not respect God ! Alas ! in my past life how many actions are there that respect not God !

Together with respect, devotion of heart is still needed ; a soul that is not devout cannot respect God, cannot love Him ; but you, Sisters, you are devoted to God, you love Him, and you long to share in His kingdom and His glory. Oh ! be devout ; give everything to God, forgetting all else in Him ; forget the world, forget yourselves for God alone. This is that true and constant devotion which alone constitutes happiness ; but remember that this devotion must be accompanied by great courage, for there will be sacrifices in thus referring everything to God ; there are sacrifices, and there will be always. But what matters it ? This is our life, the end for which we were created, our destination,—to sacrifice everything to God with devotion and courage, and to find everything in God in eternity.

Let us, Sisters, recall S. Stanislaus to mind, that amiable saint who died so young and so perfect under whose protection you are entering on your

retreat. He used to say :—"I am born for One who is Eternal, I am born only for God". And let us, too, ask ourselves: "Am I born for that which passeth away, for that which vanisheth? Certainly not; I am born for my God, for His charity, for His love." Let us then dispose ourselves to joy. Whatever may have been the dryness and the aridity of our soul hitherto, let us now enter into the joy of the spirit, a joy superior to the senses, a joy which nothing can change.

I go to God, I go in quest of God, what matters all the rest? You will then, Sisters, in solitude and silence, meditate as far as you can on these two truths: I receive everything from God, I am bound to refer everything to Him. O my God, I believe that Thou didst create me for Thyself, and didst give me all things. What joy and what glory! I am bound by justice and gratitude to refer everything to God with love, and also with respect. My life must be one of honour to God, everything ought to be for God. To know God, to love God, and to serve God,—that is everything. Have I understood this well? To live according to this rule of life is to begin in time life eternal.

EXERCISE II.

MEDITATION ON THE END OF CREATURES.

In this second exercise we shall take the second phrase, Sisters, of the fundamental meditation.¹

“Everything else, that is to say, all that is not God, everything existing, everything has been created by God to help us to reach our end, whence it follows that we ought not to attach our hearts thereto ; we should use them only inasmuch as they help us to go to God, and abstain from them in so far as they draw us from Him.”

Here then is the principle stated, let us draw our conclusions therefrom :—

First, everything that is not God, everything that does not tend to God, everything that draws me from God, health, sickness, afflictions, regard or dislike, thoughts of those who are dear to me living or dead, remembrances of the world, all this I must pluck out from my heart.

Secondly, I must not pour a malediction on creatures when they bear me the cross.

¹ Saint Ignatius calls fundamental meditation that which has for its object the last end, because it is the basis of the whole moral and spiritual structure.

Thirdly, I ought to make from everything the means of elevating myself to God.

Everything else, everything that is created was not given us by God to hold His place in our heart ; but rather to show God unto us, and guide us to Him. This is the end of creatures. But alas ! sin has destroyed the beautiful order established in the Creator's works,—pride, self-love, the researches of the creature have corrupted everything ; the heart of man has been spoiled, and the world spoiled with him. We were given a heart to tend directly to God, and to love Him only. But from the moment that sin came into the world, creatures met with an obstacle therein in their progress towards God ; then they should detach themselves completely from sin, if they wish to regain the freedom that is necessary for the pure love of the Creator.

O Sisters, ask the grace of detaching yourselves from everything that is created. O my God, may I love nothing that is not in Thee, for Thee, by Thee ! Everything else is folly,—everything else is evil.

The second reflection we should make is : In all created things I may, I must encounter the cross, and I dare not murmur against this cross, nor cast it off.

The cross is that which God holds most precious,—which He offered Jesus Christ, His only Son, because He had nothing better to give Him. It is that which Jesus Christ chose unto Himself for every day of His mortal life, so full of bitterness, sorrow, and ignominies of all kinds. The cross is graven everywhere ; everything in the world bears the impress of it ; and by this means hath God vouchsafed to warn us that we are always to be ready to accept suffering. For the rest, you, Sisters, more than any others, have chosen the cross, and you have done well. You have chosen a heavier one, you have chosen a more bitter one ; here, too, you have made an excellent choice. Be brave, and if it is bitter, if it weighs you down, be careful not to cast it off, be careful not to murmur against it.

Again, it is God's will that we should find the cross in everything that is created, in order to detach us therefrom. It is His will that we should be recalled to the remembrance of our end, and compelled to cast ourselves on Him alone by the sufferings which all things created cause us. Let us, then, in every affliction of spirit, in every sorrow, in every external or internal tempest that may occur to us, cast ourselves into the water, as did formerly the Prince of the Apostles ; let us bear our cross

courageously and always walk with confidence in the Lord,—at any price, with or against anything.

O Sisters, we should never, never cast off the cross when it appears to us, and it will appear always. We shall suffer always! But suffering, you know, is the sovereign good and happiness of earth. And, again, our own experience proves the immense need we have of suffering. If, by an impossibility, a soul knew not suffering, what, I ask you, could be its virtue? Yet, to suffer is not enough, we must suffer patiently; we shall suffer patiently when we understand that suffering is the creation of God, the choice of God, made in His love to help us to go to Him.

Thirdly, creatures are created by God for man, in order that they may help him to attain his end.

Therefore, as we said before, creatures are for you only means. What is the importance of this truth, except that we must accept everything that tends to our end, and reject everything that keeps us away therefrom; except that we must adopt that which brings us unto God, and leave that which separates us from Him? Hence, in everything that presents itself, in everything that happens to me, I reflect before God: "This pain, this sickness, this obedience, this sacrifice, this cross, comes to me from the hand of God; it guides me towards

Him ; therefore, I accept it. On the contrary, this seeking after self, those remembrances, those affections keep me away from God ; I leave them." This fidelity may, perhaps, require great battles, which may last not merely during a retreat, nor for two or for twenty years, but for a lifetime. Nature has a horror of perfection ; what suits her perfectly is imperfection. She loves everything that is lax and slack. The great secret in going to God is to make all this the means of elevating ourselves unto Him.

Oh ! may our whole being be a means of perfection against obstacles ; this will be the offering to God of the continual sacrifice of a courageous battle with ourselves.

For this we must labour, we must conquer self. But let us not refuse the battle, Sisters, let us accept the cross. Let us walk patiently. Let us put all our courage therein. What an admirable thing to think that God fights with us, that all creation was created for us ! Let us, therefore, not be afraid whatever happens. And how can we fear, Sisters, when we remember that the formal will of God is that everything be unto us a means of sanctification ? "The will of God," says the Apostle, "is that you be sanctified," and again,— "All things co-operate for the good of those who love God".

Let us, then, always bury ourselves in the almighty graces of God !

EXERCISE III.

MEDITATION ON HOLY INDIFFERENCE.

The reflections we have made in the two foregoing meditations, necessarily lead us to this conclusion :—

Therefore, I must be indifferent.

Beloved Sisters, we are bound to be indifferent without choice or will of our own ; to love health no more than sickness, honour no more than obloquy, riches no more than poverty, life no more than death. During these holy Exercises, the soul ought to cast herself into total indifference, like scales not bearing weights, in order to go to God ; the balance preserves an equilibrium, it inclines neither to one side nor to the other. And this can be readily believed, namely, that if the soul inclines to one side before God hath spoken to her, it is not the side of God.

Therefore, then,—indifference.

This is the necessary condition for choosing well, for leading a good life, for obeying promptly, and for suffering patiently.

Bear this, Sisters, well in mind ; without indifference you could never make a good choice, and you have past experience to convince you of it. Whenever you allowed your soul to be inclined to attach herself to anything of her own free will, did you not then experience fatigue, agitation, trouble, suffering? If we except from this the trials sent, or permitted by God, affliction of spirit is always the result of the soul's want of indifference. If you possess this virtue, it disappears entirely. Indifference is justice, order, peace, and in the same way it is happiness and true liberty. That is logic. This happiness and liberty follow the soul through all vicissitudes. I am suffering, I have trials. What does that do for me? It is the will of God that is being fulfilled in me. Or again, I am tried in affection, wounded in self-love, I feel bruised and heartbroken,—what matter? God wills it. I will it also. I accept it, I behold but one thing,—the will of God. There is joy, peace, and happiness. On the other hand, immediately I follow my own will without consulting the will of God, and abandon my heart to sensual affection, I feel an indefinable malady, because I am out of order.

Wherefore indifference, that complete denial of will, which rests at nothing, is alone rest.

I do not say that we obtain this indifference all at once, but we must try to do so.

Let us, Sisters, examine the secrets of our hearts to find the source of the obstacles to this indifference. Have we not some attachment, or hankering after position, wealth, or family? Some too sensual affection, some desire too little submissive to divine consolation, some preference for employment? Those obstacles must be made to vanish; and, hence, we must fight them. Battle is the first means for attaining indifference. This battle is necessary, it will give you life. And this battle will last unto death, because we cannot die without there being in us some radical influences to draw us away from God, ensnare our will, and incline us to evil.

Patience, O religious souls! Remove every obstacle courageously; but do not exact, do not require complete victory on the spot, namely, perfect and entire indifference; you must first voluntarily make up your mind to seek it incessantly in the midst of impressions, inclinations, and natural affections, to find grace and the divine will, and, by this means, to eradicate preconceived preferences. I should not prefer one thing beyond another; no,

a thousand times, no ; because that would be my own will, and I want to do only the will of God ; everything that is not the divine will is a phantom, a caprice,—is nature !

Sisters, this indifference must be attained at any price ; but observe the chief point,—the mere will is everything ; contrary impressions are nothing, absolutely nothing.

Nay, more, we must not seek to embrace everything, to do everything at once,—that is impossible. I take up, therefore, one thing, and one thing only ; I see that only, I think of that only, I seek that only ; to be delivered from this only obstacle all my efforts are directed at this moment. There is real strength in this limited choice. Why ? Because the soul directing all her powers to one object, does not divide, but concentrates, her resources. The saints never chose any other path in the correction of their faults, or in the acquisition of virtues. And, in effect, Sisters, what is a saint ? A saint is a man who has one fixed idea. Behold your holy mother¹ ; the glory of God and the salvation of souls was her only thought, her sole strength, and with her nothing was impossible ; she conquered every obstacle, she triumphed over her passions, over the world, and the devil.

¹ S. Theresa.

To battle must be joined constant prayer ; prayer weighs the balance before God, and pauseth. To pray is to desire ardently, and desire, as you know, is that within us which expects, demands, calls for, and importunes. But lax and effeminate desire is not prayer ; to allow yourself to follow nature is not prayer ; to grow weary is not prayer. We must, therefore, persevere. If you were to obtain perfection at the end of a quarter of an hour, what would you do afterwards ? But, indeed, perfection is never acquired on earth, we shall possess it only in heaven. Here below we must pray, pray always, fight, and groan. And, now, you will do all that you can to-day,—you will employ your whole being to enter on this holy indifference. I repeat that you cannot do it all in a day. Patience, you will do more to-morrow ; only always have the disposition of heart and will.

As to the practice of indifference, you have your rules, and constitutions, you have obedience. Consult them in everything ; you have no choice, you have only to follow them.

Let us, Sisters, sum up in a few words that indifference is justice, order, the condition necessary for choosing well,—it is rest.

We shall not go to God, we shall not please Him, except insomuch as we are indifferent ; for every

affection that is too sensual is to us an obstacle to indifference. Henceforth, we must fight against all seeking after self, and all self-love, in opposition to its will, or its ideas. This almost imperceptible thread must be broken by particular examination and prayer; I will say that prayer that pursueth, importuneth, and wearieth God, and obtaineth everything. And you shall obtain, Sisters, because you pray thus.

EXERCISE IV.

MEDITATION ON OUR OWN END.

Beloved Sisters, let us meditate on the last words of the fundamental principle which open the *Exercises*. Let us once more recall to mind that man is created to know God, to love God, and to serve God, and “by this means to ensure his salvation”.

Let us ponder over these last words, and draw our conclusions from them. In everything we must wish for and seek only that which is the best to guide us to our sovereign and only end,—that is to say, to the end for which we were created. This is everything.

Consider then, in peace of heart, the four following subjects :—

First, the end towards which you are tending.

Secondly, the desire for that end.

Thirdly, the choice of means ; and,

Fourthly, the better choice.

What is the end of my life, of my vocation, of the will of God towards me ? To unite me to God. But, alas ! here below perfect union cannot exist, that is reserved for the vision of heaven ; yet we can love, we can pray. Oh ! to love and to pray is the beginning, in this life, of the eternal union ; it is the union of the soul to God in faith, it is paradise on earth.

God is, therefore, my end ; I was created to reach Him, to go unto Him, to touch Him, to be bound to Him, to be one with Him alone.

God being the Sovereign End, above all other things, there are neither obstacles, nor temptations, nor trials to prevent me from going to Him. Such is the charity of God towards the creature,—behold how He has loved us !

And how are the majority of men in this respect ? Is this their sole thought, their predominant truth : I am created to go unto God, Who reigneth in souls ? Oh ! no. But we, Sisters, retired from the world, and cut off from the crimes of earth, have

we been careful to establish within us the kingdom of God, our only end? At every moment of my life, can I say that I am going to God? Is my soul with all her powers elevated directly to Him ;—directly to Him alone?

On the second point, there is only one thing to be said to show that this end should be desired. Desire is life. Yes, Sisters, our whole life should be one of desire in God. God must be desired ; for desire, as you know, is that tendency of the soul to expect, to call, to pray ; and we know well that to pray is to wish. Desire, wish, and prayer are all the same, the sole end to be attained by love. Prayer should be for everyone, and still more for the religious soul, for the Carmelite, the soul of life ; prayer should be our good. We may deprive ourselves of many things ; we may even, by an effort, do without bread for the sustenance of bodily life ; we have the experience of some saints who have done so, by a special grace ;—but for the soul to do without prayer is impossible.

Devotion is included in desire for God ; it is the necessities of the heart that aspire to God, for to be devout is to love, to sacrifice self. We must give ourselves up, and devote ourselves to God, but, above all things, we must love Him to reach Him. Love is the shortest way ; it is that which

makes us not only walk, but run and fly towards our end.

We are not anything so wonderful, we have very little to give to God ; but that little God wishes and prizes ; He solicits this devotion of heart. In this lies all our perfection, we ought not seek it elsewhere. A Carmelite should understand this devotional life more particularly, because it is hers ; she is bound to pray, and to make an offering of herself for those who do not do so. Courage, Daughters of S. Theresa, your career is a noble one ; therein lies your vocation.

Thirdly, we may consider what is the choice of means we should make to go to God. Not that we should occupy ourselves from this day forth with the election ; our one purpose here is preparation and disposition of will, in order that it may be ready to fulfil everything required of it by God in the future. In conclusion, the choice for you, Sisters, is already made so far as deliberating upon the part to choose, and you have only to rejoice that you possess the better part.

But as to your own personal means of perfecting yourselves in this first choice, as to the sacrifices to be made, as to the battles with nature, as to the labour of death with one's self, it is here that you should pledge yourselves to make the better choice.

Oh ! beloved Sisters, I entreat you in these the first hours of your retreat to endeavour to enter into the generous disposition of choosing all that may guide you most directly to your end, and direct you most surely to the end for which we were created. Be always willing to adopt the truest means, the most efficacious means, because God deserves it, and He gives you the grace to do so, and because you are called to perfection. This is everything ; and this part is the only true, the only rational one.

Pray fervently to the immaculate heart of Mary, asking her to obtain for you the proper and energetic will always to choose, whatever it costs you, the best, the clearest, the safest, and the most reliable means of those which God places at your disposal. Your vocation, Sisters, is great enough and noble enough to excite your courage. Could you say to God : I shall take the least good means ? Oh ! no, that would be weakness.

Let us, therefore, seek in the light of God that which will draw us to Him, and our labour will be blessed, and we shall reach our end, the sovereign end, the only end,—God !

O Lord, grant me that faith to which Thou hast promised everything, and that will which can deny Thee nothing.

SECOND DAY.

EXERCISE I.

MEDITATION ON THREEFOLD SIN.

BELOVED Sisters, let us say the preparatory prayer which should always precede your meditations, and in which you ask God to ordain everything perfectly within you : O my God, grant me the grace to employ all the powers and faculties of my soul in Thy glory, and Thy service.

Firstly, sin being incorporeal, you cannot picture it to yourselves, but in a soul in the state of mortal sin you behold the degradation and corruption of unclean beasts.

Secondly, we should ask pardon,—an immense grace in consideration of the sins we have committed,—of the insult offered to God, and the grace of shame, deep confusion, and bitter sorrow for sin.

Let us consider, first, the angels' sin ;
 Secondly, the sin of our first parents ; and
 Thirdly, the personal sins of man.

In the angels' sin, we can see more particularly the nature of sin.

In the sin of our first parents, grace lost by sin, and the consequences of that loss.

And in the personal sins of man, the gravity of sin, or the offence committed against God.

First, in the angels' sin, the nature of sin. The angels were unwilling "to help themselves in their freedom to render to their Creator the homage and obedience which they owed Him". These words from the book of *Exercises*, are worthy of note. It belongs to the rational creature to help himself by co-operating freely with divine grace ; the rebel angels were wanting in no help on the part of a good and liberal God,—they were wanting in themselves. Hence it is that whoever sins and is lost, sins and is lost by his own fault, by refusing to help himself, and that is his crime. Therefore, the angels and the first man were created in grace, and S. Paul tells us also : *Man was created in good works*, in order to make us fully understand that God is never wanting towards His creature, and that He always forestalls him with His gifts. To us who are born sinners, the God of all mercy offers

the grace of baptism as the fruit of our redemption ; but He requires our co-operation, as He required that of the angels and the first man, and our whole misfortune in sin is in not consenting to help ourselves by freely making courageous use of our will.

Sin, then, is pride and rebellion against God ; the angels sinned in their unwillingness to submit to, and obey God, and to correspond with grace. Alas ! Sisters, too often do we, too, despise and nullify this grace ; we ask it not with the dispositions of a heart that seeks to remain faithful to God, and that, penetrated with the knowledge of its own littleness, implores with tears the help which ensures its victory. Our evil lies in the fact that we think not of the offence offered to God by sin, or of the terrible pain inflicted on the ranks of the rebel angels ; for them it was, Sisters, that the abyss was turned up. Have we from time to time meditated on the depths of this abyss ? Let us ask ourselves if we are much less guilty than the rebel angels.

Secondly, Sisters, we behold grace lost by our first parents, who were created to gaze upon the unshadowed face of God, and destined for eternal beatitude. In an instant all is lost. In their fall they drag down with them the whole human race. Henceforth, what do we see ? A terrible corruption, the world covered with crimes, sorrow, suffer-

ing of soul and body, and penance become indispensable. And what else is the whole human life but one, long penance? Behold what one single sin brought forth! Behold the consequences of grace lost! Have we ever well thought over this? The world, for six thousand years, is only one great Calvary, and every day of our life we spend in it joyful in the midst of fresh horrors, instead of weeping over it with Jesus Christ. But is not the most terrible consequence of grace lost, that of hell earned? Hell, with its everlasting fires, is the destiny of our souls without grace; hell must be the inheritance of the human race, were we not saved by the merits of a God who redeemed us by shedding even to the last drop of His blood. But we know well that we are only saved on the one condition that the Apostle tells us, *if we suffer with Jesus Christ*. We must, therefore, humble ourselves, and do penance; let us turn towards the cross, and contemplate Jesus hanging thereon; and let us then ask ourselves what we have done up to the present, what we ought do in the future,—that which is required of us by the immense mercy that closed the gates of hell by the merits of the crucified God who redeemed us, and made us pass from death to life.

We shall see now, Sisters, in the personal sins of man, the gravity of sin.

There we stand in presence of an inconceivable mystery,—an offended God, instead of a God loved and served. This is ingratitude carried to the highest pitch. If we considered the gravity of sin by the light of faith, we ought to weep tears of blood.

Sin is addressed directly to the Author of Life ; it attacks the Creator Himself, and if the sin is mortal, it brings about the death of God in the soul. By a single mortal sin, the sinner kills God as far as He can kill the Life, for if God were susceptible of death, He would be killed by sin.

Sin is also a revolt against the absolute dominion of the sovereign Lord ; the sinner tries to crush the divine dominion. God is the Master ; now, when we commit sin, we do not recognise Him as such ; in refusing Him our submission, we contest this essential attribute.

Sin is also an insult to the infinite goodness of God,—that goodness as constant as it is inexhaustible—which ever accompanied by mercy, is the refuge of the penitent heart ; that goodness the sinner abuses, despises, repels ! Oh ! what great evil we do when we commit sin. Let us understand this well to-day, let us enter into ourselves, and give way to bitter sorrow of heart. Let us implore the salutary peace born of confusion and

sorrow ; and let us cast ourselves at the foot of the cross of Jesus Agonizing, and ask Him why He is torn, wounded, and dying ? Why, indeed ? To save us ; but we, Sisters, what have we done for the cross that saved us ?

Let us also offer to Mary the prayer that shall seem to us the best to obtain pardon. Then, confidence and courage ! Let us go to the divine goodness, to that goodness ever ready to forgive. Once more, confidence and courage in confusion.

Confusion is sweet, very sweet ; let us ask it of Mary at the foot of the cross.

EXERCISE II.

MEDITATION ON OUR OWN SINS.

Beloved Sisters, we are about to make not exactly an examination of conscience, but a general review before God of our whole life, in order that we may draw two essential fruits therefrom, namely, first, the knowledge of our lives, and, secondly, the sorrow so necessary to every soul to prepare her to receive the grace of God.

Look at your soul before God ; picture it to your-

self in a mud-prison, walking in the midst of unclean beasts, moving on a level with them on this earth. Then ask the grace of sincere hearty sorrow at sight of your sins, at sight of the cross of your Saviour.

First, cast a rapid glance over your whole life from your earliest recollections ; recall to mind your relations with the world, your interior and exterior obligations to God ; gaze on your most remarkable faults, errors, delusions, tendencies. Alas ! how weakly did you fall ! what a rapid impulse bore you to evil !

Cast, too, a glance at the time passed in the Carmelite order ; and if you are terror-stricken at the aspect of your incredible misery, ask yourselves again why, and to what purpose, you offended God, —what things you preferred to Him ? Alas ! it is vanity, an irrational caprice, unworthy even of attention, so stupid is it,—a vile creature, nothing, nothing that I have preferred to God ! Oh ! what incomprehensible,—what incredible misery, Sisters, and yet we acknowledge it ; O God, behold what my life has been ! Grace or light are not wanting to me ; prayer was my strength, and I resisted it,—I have been faithless. *Noluisti, peccasti*, thou wert unwilling, thou hast sinned. But even here what goodness to have called me, and waited for me, whilst I was carried away by sin ; here there is a

profound mystery of mercy ; but oh !—according to the words of the holy book—God knew the slime of which He moulded us, and hence He forgives us ; He takes compassion on the misery of the creature ; He comes to him, and offers him His almighty grace. But alas ! the ingratitude and folly ! the creature will not have it, and his rebelling weakness prevails over the strength of God. This is what we do, when we commit sin.

Secondly, beloved Sisters, let us ask ourselves why there is so much weakness in our past life, and, perhaps, too, in our present life in the same proportion ! Why ? The answer is in our poor nature, which is nothing but folly and inconsistency, and which we followed. We cannot attach ourselves to good, nor bravely bind ourselves by a resolution, and persevere in it ; we cannot attach ourselves to the different dispositions through which we pass, nor be guided by faith through those sad vicissitudes, which fill every moment of our life. But, above all things, we cannot pray ; and what are we capable of, when we cannot pray ? We think we pray sometimes ; but, great God ! what a prayer ! Is it not rather an offence against Thy Majesty ? Prayer well said brings us the life of God, and this divine life destroys in us the life of sin. Not to follow God's life is not to live ; this is the misfortune of a soul that does not

pray, and from which comes nothing but that folly and inconsistency establish their empire over her. Then what opposition is there between us and God, —between God, the supreme wisdom, between God who maketh everything by weight and measure, and created us to His image, and us, rational creatures, who abuse our reason so as to liken ourselves to the brute, for the purpose of going on a venture,—such has been our life, and sin is the fruit thereof.

We know, beloved Sisters, that all sin is a rebellious, an immeasurable, and absurd pride. Tempests, revolutions, troubles, passions follow in its train. *Non serviam*, I will not obey; that is what it says. Incomprehensible utterance! What are we that we dare to say, I will not obey? What are we who have committed sin? What am I myself? What is my character? What am I on this earth that supports me? A sorry nothing, an atom which the least breath removes, an imperceptible point. And in comparison with the angels and saints in heaven, what am I? A wretched sinner, a creature despised for my imperfections; what,—I might almost say, an infinite,—distance separates me from them, and makes me unworthy of their society! Yet I wish to be thought much of, flattered, loved, —what folly!

What reflections am I to make now, if I consider

myself in the presence of God? Who is this God whom I have so grievously insulted, whom I offend every day? What is God in His wisdom, in His greatness, and in His almighty power? A just God, doing nothing save what is right, meet, and equitable; and I am meanness, injustice, iniquity! God is infinitely good and merciful, and I am wickedness and malice itself.

Once again, let us here cast a glance over our whole life. Whilst contemplating the perfections of God, let us say to ourselves:—"Do I esteem myself as anything? I am proud. Where was I, when I offended God? What are the things that delight my heart and my soul? Vanity! folly!"

It is here we must enter into the true knowledge of ourselves; it is here we must busy ourselves, and plunge whole and entire into the most profound humility. Oh! how much this virtue is prized by the soul that knows herself! how much it becomes a necessity for her! Could we, in effect, be proud if we knew ourselves? Pride is the joyfulness of self, nothing more.

Sisters, we ought earnestly ask of God the clear and intimate sight of our misery, in order to humiliate us profoundly, and to let us rejoice in our humiliation before God. Then we should abandon ourselves to confusion and sorrow at sight of our

past life, and of the infinite goodness of God to us ; we should ask Him to put us beneath the press of His justice, in order that all our impurities may pass away, and one thing alone remain to us,—the purity acquired for us in the blood of Jesus Christ. Perfect as was Jesus Christ, Sisters, how humble and submissive He was ! He so submissive, and we still so far removed from his spirit ! But, courage, here again we find mercy, even for pride. We must also abandon ourselves to sentiments of admiration and gratitude ; how many others had neither the same means, nor the same abundant graces that I have received, and yet for one single mortal sin may have been cast into hell ! And Thou, O God, didst call me, and wait for me whilst I lingered, and seek me when I fled. Thou hast given me every help, Thou hast given me Mary, a Mother full of mercy. Thou hast given me everything,—everything, even that which was useful to me in no other way than that it gave me pleasure. Instead of punishing and chastising me with so many other guilty souls, Thou hast guarded and succoured and blessed me. What then have I to do ? Ah ! I should be sorry, truly sorry for having offended God,—a sorrow which I long for, deep and lively, but exceedingly penetrating. Oh ! Sisters, cast yourselves at the foot of the Cross, cast yourselves into the arms of the

Saviour, making a sacrifice of yourselves, and giving yourselves to Him wholly and entirely ; and if any ill-regulated affection still remains to you, come to Calvary, there to offer it up for Him.

Let us go, Sisters, with Mary, your Mother ; ask Jesus Christ for humility and sorrow, entreat your Saviour to change you. I no longer wish to be what I was, or what I am ; I wish to change, and for that to labour and to fight against my nature. We shall now conclude this meditation by wrapping ourselves unscrupulously in deep and peaceful thought, in self-abandonment and confidence, and without anxiety, for such are the commands of God.

EXERCISE III.

CONFERENCE ON THE GRACES TO ASK FOR.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.—It is well to recall to mind here what the saints tell us with regard to the discernment of the spirit ; for this purpose we shall take two souls of entirely opposite dispositions, the one very fervent ; the other very lax. The latter class does not concern you ; you can, without vanity, in your holy vocation, which makes it

almost impossible for you to fall into this state, believe that this is so. In a very fervent and devout soul that follows the counsel of her good angel, and that, consequently, cannot go against God, the divine action is peaceful and often consoling; the Lord gives her peace, He does not tempt her, and He it is that sustains, consoles, and fortifies her. The devil, on the other hand, cannot enter in the character of a friend, that is to say, pleasantly, into this faithful soul; he disturbs her, creates a tumult, torments her, he cannot leave her in the peace she is enjoying, simply because it is peace. We may therefore conclude, Sisters, that, in a devout and fervent soul, the action of God is peace; and, on the other hand, everything that troubles and disquiets her is the devil. This is very simple, but very clear.

In a lax and faithless soul, the spiritual action of both is different, which is easily understood; for God, in order to enter, has to do violence, either by Himself, or by His agents, because God is not at home in a faithless soul. Hence He will send trouble, He will permit uneasiness, but never discouragement. God does not discourage, He encourages always. As to the devil, he will not trouble this soul; on the contrary, he abandons her, and lets her slumber; but he cannot give her peace,

for he is the enemy of peace. Therefore, if trouble, sorrow, disquietude, or desolation, spring up in the faithful soul, it is the work of the enemy,—and what are we to do? We must be patient, and bear it. We must be careful above all things, not to abandon prayer; we ought to pray much. And then see if I have not consolation, sensible help, patience. Is my will contrary to God? No. Have I not acted according to His will? Yes. Then patience! Wait, seek, and pray! Has not God said that we must wait?

Patience, then, patience! in order that we may give to God that which He loveth,—a cheerful heart.

MEDITATION.—In retreat, beloved Sisters, in the practice of meditation, the really important thing, the most important of all things, is to ask for grace, and, above all, the grace attached to the truth which is occupying you. For you, particularly at this moment, there are three graces which you ought to ask for fervently :—

The first grace, eminently needful, is that sorrow which we may also call contrition and confusion. Not sensible sorrow (which is good when God gives it to us), but substantial, real sorrow, which has for its foundation the knowledge of ourselves. We must ask for this fervently, for it is indispensable

to perfect conversion ; the heart must be penetrated with profound sorrow for its sins, before it begins the work of its purification. The saints, who had led such wonderful lives, were covered with confusion at the remembrance of their sins ; they regarded themselves as the greatest criminals, and yet what were their faults, great God ? And yet they did not deceive themselves, they were right ; we shall think thus, too, when we are holy like them. Behold your mother, your seraphic mother Theresa ; how many times did she not write that she committed grave faults, mortal sins, and yet she never committed a single mortal sin ; it was her contrition, her confusion, and above all her love for God that made her imagine she had done so. And perhaps we, Sisters, think that we have nothing very great to reproach ourselves with. The saints used to weep for whole years over one sin ; they had the light of God. And as for us, our self-love blinds us. Let us ask the grace of light in order that we may be humiliated, and covered with confusion ; it is an act of humility already to feel that we stand in need of it. Ask also for horror and detestation of sin,—in a word, for everything that is necessary to obtain for you forgiveness.

We should also ask for another grace, Sisters, and one no less important than the first. In your holy

vocation you may have glided into sickness or disorder. It is not enough to be freely and generously separated from the world, and all that passes therein ; there is yet another thing to do, and that is to set about maintaining order. There are very few souls moulded and regulated by purity of faith ; we have all within us disorder,—disorder in our senses, in our affections, in our memory, in our thoughts, in our intelligence ; disorder in our heart, disorder in our actions, and disorder even sometimes in our virtues. Order is the complete submission of our being to God, and hence, you call it obedience. Wherever disorder is found, there, too, is imperfection ; order is perfection. God is order, for order is peace, justice, wisdom, truth ; and God requires His intelligent creatures to be also in order, so as to unite themselves to Him. It is here, Sisters, at the feet of our Lord that you must recognise disorder and all the miseries that follow in its train, the fluctuations of life, and the faults committed in this house through failing to regulate your senses, and all your faculties by faith. Ask the grace of order whilst humbly acknowledging everything in which you fail in this respect ; pray, pray to Mary to implore this benefit for you, and to obtain for you a will noble and strong enough to draw you out of disorder, to hate it, and to establish

you in that which tends towards God alone, and enables you to live a supernatural life.

The third grace to be asked for, is contempt and forgetfulness of the world. We are easily persuaded by the world in which we mixed,—the world still follows us, notwithstanding the cloister, holy discipline, the bars; and the world with its frivolous character, its base inclinations, and its perversity, is still capable of exercising on us, and over us, its influences. We know well that the world is vanity, frivolity, pride. Oh! we do not know the world well enough, we do not separate ourselves sufficiently from it. You maintain its spirit and its affections, which ought to be unknown and strangers to this retreat of piety. Ask for knowledge of the world in the sense in which we explain it; you have need of it, great need. For a soul to have this knowledge is to be in the way of the highest perfection. Recall to mind the things which formerly occupied your worldly life, and whatsoever you still keep thereof in your words, thoughts, and affections, and in the alliance which your heart makes with natural, rather than with spiritual and supernatural, things. In your present life of contemplation, you ought to break from this alliance, in order that you may be occupied more easily with spiritual things alone; this, Sisters, is of supreme

importance. Nothing human, no sensual or grievous impressions,—we must have none of these. We may not be able to attain of ourselves this end, but let us ask and we shall receive ; grace is promised to those who pray for it. Our Lord Himself has said,—*With Me all things are possible*. Prostrate yourselves at His feet, entreat Him, conjure Him, importune Him, and you are sure to be heard. But remember that the tilling of the soil is necessary for the harvest ; God then gives us noble desires, effectual desires, and do you never forget to address your prayer to Him through the immaculate heart of Mary,—for this is the surest as well as the sweetest means of obtaining the triple grace, which is the theme of this day's exercises.

Finally, make a full offering of all that you have and all that you are, into the hands of your Lord and Creator. Devote yourselves altogether to one thing, to one thing only,—purification and sorrow. For now the day is at hand, and the moment of forgiveness.

EXERCISE IV.

MEDITATION ON HELL.

Let us continue this day, Sisters, according to the order of the truths that belong to it; let us meditate this evening on hell. S. Ignatius proposes this meditation by the application of the senses. We can consider hell in different ways. The remembrance which is coupled with our faith may be useful for every situation of our soul; it is also true to say that meditation on hell will bring you perfect contrition by love and gratitude; this is the spirit which you should bring to the consideration of this undoubted truth to-day.

Let us first beg of God the grace that all that we have and all that we are, our thoughts, sentiments, and affections, may be employed in His service, and for the good of our souls.

First, we shall peaceably, and with faith, picture to ourselves the place, as it exists; we shall enter therein in spirit, we shall consider its size, its length, its depth, its terrible aspect.

Secondly, we shall ask the graces which we wish to obtain,—a keen and penetrating sensation of the pain which the damned souls suffer, in order that if

ever, in consequence of our neglect, we come to forget the love of our Lord, this fearful remembrance may help us, and prevent us from relapsing into sin.

Behold in the first place the souls now suffering in those lakes of fire ; question them, and endeavour to make them tell you what it is that has cast them into this abyss. Alas ! to escape from pain and suffering, they sought sensual gratification and forbidden pleasures ; they wished to find apart from God that happiness which is found in Him alone.

On this earth, virtue seems to be pain and suffering, and imperfection, pleasure ;—delusion ! dream ! Hell is right, and we are wrong. We are false to ourselves and to others when we think that happiness consists in imperfection, and seek it therein. God has made no change in the reprobate soul with the view of making it suffer, He has only left her her sin, and that is her evil, her torment ; her sin is her hell. And do we not see every day this truth partially fulfilled ? The proud soul suffers by her pride ; the sensual by her immortification ; in a word, the faithless soul, by her infidelity. And this is easily understood. O my God ! grant me the grace that evil may always be evil to me, and the object of my detestation for ever !

In the second place, you shall hear the melancholy and heartrending groans of the damned. Great God ! what is happening in these prisons of fire ? Oh ! the despair of those unfortunate souls, and the object of their everlasting regret is God lost,—God lost and for ever ! Unhappy souls, you sought, and what did you find ? What is to be found apart from God, apart from holiness ? Eternity without God ! eternity without light ! eternity without the peace of the Lord ! eternity without good, without love ! No relaxation, no rest ; and yet peace and rest, even on this land of exile, are of the greatest benefit to the soul. What pleasures are in store for us in these hours of prayer and meditation ; I do not mean prayer said with great consolation, but prayer said in peace of heart, at rest, and in the union of faith with God !

After beholding those souls without God for eternity, let us return to ourselves. Eternity without God ! And yet God alone is worthy of our love, God is the Treasure of all perfection, God is the Treasure of all glory ! And still we do not seek God !

Eternity without God ! eternity without light ! it is darkness that burns and consumes ! Eternity without love,—without the love of God ! If here below some souls seem to be separated from Him

by trials, there is affection at bottom ; they suffer for God, and what a comfort that is ! But in hell they suffer without any good, without any help. Taste now if you can, beloved Sisters, the different torments which the damned experience. O my God ! I, too, might have had the same inheritance ; I, too, might have for eternity the society of reprobates, of devils ! And Thou didst save me, Thou didst bless me ! And I do nothing for Thee ! Even sometimes I murmur against the exercises which hang heavily on me in my religious life ! Alas ! in what a position am I ? But what shall I do ? what ought I not to do ? Turn towards your Saviour ; and, regarding your own soul, ask Him what He thought of those souls who voluntarily and deliberately cast themselves into hell, when they might have saved themselves. Ask Him what have you done any more than they, that you should be spared and tolerated and blessed ; thank Him, learn toleration and patience from His mercy, and become devoted to Him. Devotion, as you know, is love and gratitude ; devotion is your vocation and your school. Hell ought to be for you a school of love and zeal. Hell exists for you only to this end. You need not meditate on it for the purpose of turning you aside from evil. To love God is sufficient for you ; and if it were otherwise you would

not be daughters of your seraphic mother. Your zeal must be kindled whenever you think of hell. How many souls are cast into it every day. Unhappy that we are ! how can we live with this reflection ? We do not think of these souls, and we think of ourselves ! Oh ! we should pray, we should be devout, we should make an offering of ourselves, and sacrifice ourselves to the love and justice of God ! When S. Theresa saw one day, by divine revelation, those souls falling into everlasting fire, her heart could not contain itself, her zeal consumed her !

Let us then also, Sisters, burn with the zeal of charity !

THIRD DAY.

Argument—Care, exactitude, and the fruit thereof. (ANNOT. IV.)
Desolation, waiting, perseverance. (ANNOT. XIII.)

EXERCISE I.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

I. **I**T waits. II. It tests. III. It strikes.

I. It waits :—

1. With what patience supporting us.
2. With what indulgence forgiving us.
3. With what wisdom advising us.

II. It tests :—

1. Necessity of the test for expiation and merit.
2. Its efficacy with the soothing influence and help of grace.
3. In its end of sanctification, to let us die and be separated from the world.

III. It strikes :—

1. In life, the decisive crisis, *utinam ?*
 2. At the hour of death, *pœna peccati*,—
the sacrifice of life,—the hour is at
hand.
 3. In eternity without remedy—or per-
haps, in purgatory.
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EXERCISE II.

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT.

EXERCISE III.

LUKE XV.

- I. The joy of the Pastor.
- II. The joy of the Master.
- III. The joy of the Father.

Ita gaudium erit in cœlo.

EXERCISE IV.

REPETITION—JUSTICE AND MERCY.

- I. Justice awaits—mercy is preventive.
- II. Justice tests—mercy sustains.
- III. Justice strikes—mercy saves.

N.B.—The subjects for the third day were only indicated and not developed by Père de Ravignan.

We reproduce them here as he left them, for the sake of those who wish to devote the third day to the first work, that is to say, to the practice of the purgative life.

The authors of *Directoire des Exercices*, relying on a note in *The Book of Exercises*, and on their own experience in the guidance of souls, observe that meditation on death, judgment, and the other punishments with which sin is visited, should only be omitted very rarely, because they are very efficacious in detaching the heart from visible objects, and in inspiring it with the holy fear of the Lord, which is one of the most powerful means of salvation.

In case it is desired to spend the third day of retreat in the exercises of the purgative life, we may

pause at the subjects here indicated, and take for their development meditation on death, judgment, and the prodigal son, as found in different retreat-books, as *Manrèze*, *La solitude du Chrétien*, by Père Crasset, or any similar work. Then, if we cannot devote more than eight days to retreat, we must include in one day the exercises indicated under the sixth; and as some part should be abridged, it may be more convenient to omit the exercises given under the sixth day *secundo*.

FOURTH DAY.

EXERCISE I.

MEDITATION ON THE KINGDOM OF JESUS CHRIST.

BELOVED Sisters, we must now go to our Lord Jesus Christ; your only occupation during retreat hitherto was contemplating Him. As for the rest, is not this your life as religious every day? You will then represent to yourself the adorable person of our divine Master; you will follow Him through towns, and burghs, to announce the word of God; you will ask of Him the grace never to remain deaf to His voice, but to march in His train, to love Him and to fulfil His holy will; in this lies your whole vocation.

In this meditation is proposed a king chosen by God; He calls to Him all who wish to be saved. The conditions are,—to be clothed like Him, to

live like Him, to labour like Him, and to fight like Him ; to these conditions is attached a reward. This is a similitude.

Behold now the divine reality : Jesus Christ calls us, like a King calling together his army, and tells us that He seeks to submit all souls to the dominion of His Father. Listen, Sisters, to this divine King :—"Will you follow Me? Will you watch with Me? Will you pray with Me? Will you suffer with Me? Come and follow Me ; come and walk with Me." And when the soul is summoned, what answer does she give? This is the only thing to answer :—"Yes, Lord, I will follow Thee". This is an obligation common to every Christian ; all are bound to be devout, to devote themselves to God, since salvation depends thereon, and a man must be mad to consent to sacrifice the salvation of his soul.

But we come to the point that concerns you. There are certain chosen souls whom Jesus calls to live in His familiarity. What an honour ! what a glory ! You belong to these souls, Sisters, and yet you would hesitate and draw back ! Oh ! no. This familiar summons of our Lord, as you can easily understand, is a great grace. It is very important that we ask Him the grace of remaining faithful to it. You must not doubt it, Sisters, Jesus

calls each one of you in particular ; He calls you by your name, as S. John says ; you are His sheep, and He knows all His sheep by name. “My child,” He says to you, “come with Me. Come to conquer souls for My Father. Be not reluctant to share My labours. And accordingly as you have worked, and fought with Me, you shall share likewise in My happiness and My glory.” Again, He asks you :—“Will you follow counsel? Will you be poor?” “Yes, Lord.” And then what must you do? You must make yourself like unto Him, and seek that which your King sets the highest value on, in order to offer it to Him. And you know what He has chosen for Himself ; you know what He has done, what He loved. And then it will cost you nothing to imitate Him lovably and devoutly.

In human things, in the armies of this world, every soldier seeks distinction ; and I do not seek to be distinguished in the train of Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven, to accept the honour of following Him more closely, of labouring and suffering with Him ! O my divine Master, let me seek the best possible means of proving to Thee my love, my devotion, my fidelity !

The precepts given to all Christians are not enough for you, Sisters ; for those who love God, I

do not think them enough ; for such persons stand in need of counsel, which may be considered as the offerings to be made to the heart of Jesus. Courage then, and embrace these counsels with all your energy and will. And do you not see, Sisters, that from that time forth, you will be always acting, as S. Ignatius says, against sensuality, against the spirit of the world, and against all that is carnal within you, in order to follow Jesus Christ in poverty and insults. You must think humanly no longer, no longer consult your inclinations ; but you must act, you must do violence to yourself, and to the voluptuous inclinations of your nature, which is the true way of giving yourself to God.

To-day, therefore, Sisters, when hearing the voice of Jesus, we must make Him this act of oblation :—
 “I offer myself to Thee, O divine King, to follow Thee as much as possible ; I am ready by Thy grace to bear everything, to be despised with Thee and like Thee, provided that it is to Thy glory and Thy will, and always in forgetfulness of self ; in this I am resolved. I shall tread in Thy footsteps, O Jesus ; I shall imitate Thee, who art my all, my happiness, and my life. Henceforth I shall try to bear everything,—labour, pain, affliction, suffering ; I shall try to bear everything, provided that Thou will grant me the grace.” These sentiments spring-

ing from the ardour of a devout soul, cannot fail to be agreeable to the heart of Jesus; and whatever He may reserve for this soul to render her conformable to Him, we may rely on it, the divine Master will be always near her to offer consolation, and to support her, and strengthen her. Be not afraid then, Sisters. Fear not. Our Lord is a good Master.

EXERCISE II.

SECOND MEDITATION ON THE KINGDOM OF JESUS CHRIST.

Beloved Sisters, let us go then to our Lord as to our King, to our Master, and as I said before this morning (and you understood it well), it is the true beginning, or, if you wish, it is a fresh beginning of the retreat, it is a fresh foundation that we are laying in ascending to the very Source of Life itself. You should then with all the strength of your mind devote yourselves to the Adorable Person of our Lord, follow Him, and never leave Him. We must likewise return for the second time

to contemplating the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Recollect yourselves, Sisters, recollect yourselves more than ever.

You will represent to yourselves the King whom you serve, walking, journeying along, and, in simple poverty, announcing the kingdom of God ; then humbly prostrate at His feet, you will ask Him to open the ears of your heart in order that you may understand His Voice, and not lag behind, but follow Him, and accomplish His Will perfectly. You see there are two things in this ; our Lord's will, which is certain ; and your will, which must be strengthened to do great labour for Him.

And now, Sisters, remember this call to grace which is given you, and which you hear. This call is the vocation which demands that you follow Jesus Christ in a more perfect manner by the way of devotion. Hear again the words of our Lord ; hear again the magnificent offer which He makes to every one of you, saying :—"Will you come with Me ? Will you conquer souls to bring them to My Father ? Will you labour and suffer with Me ? Will you fight with Me ? Will you, in fine, reign with Me, and share in My glory ?" Observe that it is a demand addressed to your will ; it is to the will that our Good Master speaks, for you are free to direct your own will. Our Lord has said in His

Gospel,—*Are you willing? be ye perfect.* This is very clear.

Here recall to mind one of your seraphic Mother's visions. She beheld our Lord traversing the world in order to meet souls who were desirous of receiving His graces; but the divine Master is plunged in profound sorrow, because the souls which He destines to receive His most precious gifts, answer Him by a refusal. Then turning an eye on the burning heart of Theresa, which was expanding with devotion, and open unto Him, He poured into it graces without number, which He was unable to give to so many others. Oh! beloved Sisters, do you suppose that those graces which are destined for so many others, are not for you? Do you wish for them? Our Lord offers them to you, He awaits but one desire of your will,—the disposition of your heart,—to pour them down on you. And if you experience profound sorrow at sight of those souls that are led astray, and of those hearts that are closed to grace, and to the Lord, and refuse to love Him, it is also most consoling to think that you may profit by those graces which the Heart of Jesus seeks to shower down on you. Entertain, therefore, a holy sorrow for your tarrying, your languor, your disinclination, and for the pain which you caused the Heart of Jesus by resting

behind. Be sorry also for those souls to whom our Lord wishes to dispense His graces, and who reject them. Twofold cause of too legitimate sorrow, but sorrow calm and peaceful which should be ruled by, and, as it were, absorbed in confidence and love! Then say to Jesus:—"Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest". It will be no longer the case of the young and faithless man in the Gospel, who refused our Saviour's request, and went away quite sad,—*abiit mœrens*. And yet if you have not done like him, if you have not gone sadly away, alas! alas! what sluggishness, what negligence may you not be guilty of! Well, this is the day of our Master's new call,—answer it, but with the inviolable resolution of persevering therein. You have often said:—"I will follow Thee, I will go everywhere with Thee". And then you have encountered I know not what thoughts, what affections, and instead of being devout, you have been drawn into weakness and lagging, you have ceased to regard our Lord, and no longer wish to follow Him so closely. Oh! this return to ourselves is very humiliating. But courage, courage, it is certain that God calls^r us in this moment, and He is disposed to shower down on our hearts the treasures of His grace.

What should we do to answer to this invitation?

We must correspond ; but we see difficulties arising at this single word. And how would it be otherwise, since there is question of the contradiction of our nature and inclinations ; since we must overthrow all unstable foundations, change, destroy, transform ? There is difficulty then, but so much the better ; without this there would be no merit. To approach our Lord, I must act in a sense contrary to myself ; there are remembrances, affections, preoccupations, which occur to me ; I turn my back, I break off ; that is the difficulty, but it must be. The world may have followed us, and then our heart is a world. We must then still fight in order to find the spirit of the Gospel, which is so opposed to the vain, frivolous, and disordered spirit of the world, condemned by Jesus Christ. There is then a difficulty, and that is what Jesus Christ loves ; He awaits your action against everything that forms an obstacle or barrier in you. It is difficult, but there only is truth, there is spirit, life, and liberty, and peace ; then you are in your holy vocation, in the Carmelite vocation ; out of this you are not in your vocation. Out of this, it is no longer Carmel. Everything in your vocation is contrary to the flesh, to sensuality, and to nature ; we must then always, and in everything, fight against ourselves ; in this combat alone is found spiritual

life, because it unites us to Him who said,—*I am the Life*. Besides this there is no liberty, no life, no joy, no happiness, no peace ; no peace as long as we do not offer to the Heart of Jesus the presents of true mortification of the senses, nature, and the spirit.

You perhaps may say :—"Alas ! hitherto I could do nothing, I have lagged weakly behind". Change your words and say :—"Behold me, O Lord, I come unto Thee, I acknowledge that Thou art the King of my heart, I declare that henceforth I wish to regard Thee only ; I will follow Thee, and stay by Thy side in poverty and contempt, without seeking the affection of creatures, I promise to live like Thee, in Thee. But once again, O Lord, I can do nothing." And this is the good Master's answer,—*Come, follow Me*. Oh ! the motive is such a noble one ! What goal more glorious than the love of this God-King, but a God poor and insulted ! Go, crush, vilify, and destroy this nature. And do you not hear our Lord ? He says to you as He said to S. Peter,—*My child, do you love Me more than any other ?*

Make nò resolutions just at this moment, but begin a new life to go to our Lord with pleasure, since He brings you peace. And observe, Sisters, that this is no fiction no castle in the air ; it is

reality. Jesus Christ, the King, calls us to carry our cross after Him, as did Simon the Cyrenean. And how could you come here, Sisters, how could you enter this house, and remain in it, and not make to Him that entire offering which cuts off, removes, and separates? Do it then even to-day; ascend, if needs be, to Calvary; ascend like Abraham to the place of sacrifice; tell our Lord that you are at length about to immolate yourselves on His beloved cross. It is here we must begin to be a fool in that folly which is reason, pure and holy, and true wisdom.

Let us here in a few words sum up all the impressions, all the resolutions which ought to be ours after the two meditations which we have made on the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Let us then behold our Lord, and taste of His sufferings and His cross, and at the same time of His goodness, tenderness, and familiar intercourse; what admirable lessons in the familiarity of our Lord! Near Him and with Him what can we not do? Endeavour then to pay homage to this divine, poor, and insulted King. I wish to be of those who acquire distinction in His train. He calls you, He awaits you,—this is the most undoubted, the most indisputable reality,—to give you all His graces, to receive you into His heart, to

make you enter on this divine life, and to give you that peace and happiness which make atonement for every sacrifice.

EXERCISE III.

CONFERENCE ON TRUE DEVOTION TO OUR LORD.

From this moment, from this day forth, you understand perfectly, beloved Sisters, that we must endeavour to dwell in, and have constant intercourse with, our Lord. Our first thought when awaking,—when, so to speak, we resume life,—should be our Lord. In like manner, in all these exercises it is His Adorable Person, His words, His actions, that we should consider. And in this the first moment in which we apply ourselves in a special manner to the attachment of the Divine Saviour, we ought to fortify ourselves by every means in our resolutions, and be devoted to Him.

Let us consider one of the chief obstacles which prevent a soul from becoming attached to our Lord.

There is a kind of half-will, which is neither good nor bad ; I am fully assured that it is not yours ;

but it may attack religious souls as well as others, in order to prevent them from going to the Divine Master. There is then a bad midway, which I shall call hesitation, and which may be thus explained,—To will and not to will; to know and not to know. In this melancholy midway, people hesitate and do nothing. There may be in this a want of light, but there may also be weakness, laxity, and I know not what inclination of the soul, which we have called hesitation, and which is the contrary to decision. Now, to answer our Lord's call, it is evident there is needed decision,—constant, true, assiduous decision, a decision conformable to His intentions and your desires; we must be willing to, and must actually make war on everything that is changeable and uncertain. Thus, to know or not to know, to do or not to do, is a bad midway; and you are more unfitted than anyone to stop at this. This hesitation is so much to be avoided that the author of the holy *Exercises* does not speak of them, or even imagine them; he recognises only two things, to will, and not to will; but there is no question of indecision in so far as the rules of the government of the spirit, or anything else is concerned, because S. Ignatius has no advice to give for a disposition which ought not to exist. Not to will is bad, very bad, but at least it

is something ; to will and not to will is not a state or a vocation, is not a disposition of Providence,— it is nothing.

Sisters, give not the least entrance into your heart to this *will and will not*. For you above all others, and in your life, it is error, delusion, and the most dangerous of all things. It is not, it cannot be your life ; for you it is nameless. We must then hate this shameful indecision. To hesitate, to balance, to waver, belongs not to a true daughter of S. Theresa ; it is impossible to a child of Carmel. Take care then, the enemy of salvation is there ; the soul that is willing may be very imperfect, but then she wills, and there is hope. On the other hand, the soul that wavers pleases the devil, who greatly loves hesitation ; she borders on lukewarmness, and lukewarmness of the most dangerous kind. Our Lord has said, *Better crime, better death*, for then at least there is sometimes a chance of repentance. Far better those follies that are so commonly known, provided only that one gives them up, and preserves the disposition of going to our Lord.

Sisters, sound your soul, descend into it torch in hand, asking our Lord to descend with you into her most hidden depths ; and there look and ask yourselves if there is not uncertainty, hesitation, *the*

will and will not there ; then throw into all your actions a disposition of decisiveness,—to will, and to will even unto folly to cast yourselves on God. O my Saviour, I protest that my deliberate decision is to follow Thee. With that, perhaps, you will say, we should also pray and fight, since this is life ; but is not to will to pray and to fight ? Yes, and our Lord is satisfied therewith, because this is what He requires, what He expects ; and He makes to Himself great peace in the soul. Our Lord wishes for these souls, He seeks them, He asked them of S. Theresa, He has numbered them among His daughters ; and thus numbered fear not, you have peace. If trouble comes, it will only come from the devil, and this is a good sign, because then he is displeased. Behold then laid the first foundation of devotion to our Lord, to be decisive, to have no hesitation, to be willing to follow this divine Master, and to become firmly attached to Him.

But what is the meaning of becoming attached to our Lord. It is this. Let us put aside spiritual labour which is good, but which we leave for the moment, and let us approach God from our heart. In order to approach our Lord, and to become attached to Him, we must ardently desire to know Him familiarly in the different stages of His mortal life. By this means I shall love Him the more, I

shall follow Him more closely, I shall know His spirit, the business and the desire of His heart in everything that He has done, in His words, actions, sufferings, and in all that He now inspires me with in the bottom of my heart. Oh ! let us ask for this profound knowledge of His Sacred Humanity, His life, and His works ; let us apply our hearts and our minds thereto, and think not by this means, Sisters, that you will withdraw from the path of prayer and true and solid devotion. This thought on occurring to you should be banished with indignation and anger. Remember what S. John of the Cross and your holy Mother say to you on this point,—*A soul which is attached to our Lord, as we have just said, hears His voice.* Now our Divine Saviour speaks to us, and calls us incessantly in three ways,—by His lessons, by His example, and by the inspirations of His grace ; but, above all, by the eminent grace of vocation.

But, again, what is the meaning of becoming attached to our Lord ? It is to offer ourselves to Him, and to become devoted to His service always and entirely, with all the perfection indicated in your vows and rule. Now, Sisters, to make this offering of yourselves and to be devout is your life ; for immolation is the essence of your soul, your element. Suffer, oh ! suffer your soul to be pene-

trated with this desire ; you must not lessen the grace of your vocation ; that would not be humility, but disdain and laxity. Desire, oh ! desire to distinguish yourselves in the service of your God, to please Him, to love Him before any other ; this need not prevent you from rejoicing when others do better than you ; you should rejoice, and any other disposition would show that it was your own glory, not God's, that you desired. Come, Sisters, no hesitation, no fear, since it is your God that calls you. *Come and follow Me.* To hesitate, I say again, is a disease worse than death. You must, therefore, give yourselves to our Lord. But this is already done. We must at least believe so ; but neither must we believe that there is to be no fresh beginning ; on the contrary, we must always begin anew. Then you must have the universal desire of devoting yourselves, not as *you* wish of yourselves, but as it shall please the Lord to choose for you. As for that, you have only to follow the path which this good Master has chosen for you,—this life of Carmel to which you are called. To be sure, you can perform, or not perform a journey, follow, or not follow a path ; but when you do perform a journey, when you do follow a path, be sure that you perform it well, that you follow it well. Come, Sisters, and perform this journey of the

religious life, follow this path of Carmel, but perform it, follow it in the company of our Lord; remain at His side by your fidelity, by your zeal, by your obedience; make Him a truly general offering of yourselves.

Behold then the meaning of becoming attached to our Lord. Is there yet another thing? Yes, here it is, a simple, but a most direct way, and that is to love what He loved, to reject what He rejected, to choose what He chose. And what did this good Saviour, the King of heaven, the God of our hearts, love? What did He love? The opposite of that which the world loves, the opposite of nature, of flesh, of the senses. What did He choose? Warfare, suffering, contradiction, the cross. What did He love with the love of predilection? Poverty. He loved poverty in a special manner; it was His mother next to Mary His Mother. And it is after His example that all the founders of Orders say to us in their writings:—"You must love poverty as your mother". For the rest, I have only to regard Jesus Christ to say to myself,—“Poverty is my mother, she it is that makes me a religious”. Then what did our good Master love? Humiliation and contempt, beneath which He was always patient, always mild, always good. What indulgence, what mercy in all His

Admirable Person. The virtue of our Divine Master is no better virtue, and yet His heart was oppressed with sorrow, but still compassionate as ever. And should we not therefore, Sisters, love humiliation and contempt? Should we not desire them? Would to God that we were called to shun with Jesus this better part of self-denial. Ah! would to God!

We shall conclude this meditation by asking of the Heart of Jesus the grace to love what He loved, and to become attached to His service, by devoting ourselves to the better part. When He took a heart, everything is told; it is done. Let us in like manner pray to the Immaculate Heart of Mary to obtain for us the fulness of grace and blessings.

EXERCISE IV.

MEDITATION ON THE MYSTERY OF THE VISITATION.

INTRODUCTION.—We shall now take successively some of the mysteries of our Lord's Life, since we cannot comprise it altogether. As you know, Sisters, the grace to ask for in the meditations or contemplations on the mysteries of our Lord, is an

intimate knowledge of the Divine Master in the mystery on which we are meditating, in order that, by this intimate knowledge, we might love Him the more, and loving Him the more, we might attach ourselves more faithfully to His service. It is evident that each of the mysteries of our Lord's Life consist of persons meeting, words spoken, deeds done,—persons, words, actions, this is what is given us the better to appreciate these mysteries; the holy author of the Exercises also says in the method which he gives us,—“You must fix the persons, you must consider the actions”.

Another remark which may be applied to this kind of meditation is that the subjects must not be considered historically and as if past, but as if present. Thus Jesus Christ is not born, is not dead, but He is incarnate, He is arisen, He speaks, He dies before your eyes.

Let us come to the subject of our meditation.

MEDITATION.—And first let us now more than ever ask of God the grace that our thoughts, the affections of our heart, and the operations of our soul may be fully ordained to His greatest glory.

Then it is well to remember the fact briefly,—The angel had announced to Mary that her cousin Elizabeth had conceived the holy Precursor by the grace of God; and Mary set out and went over the

mountains to visit her cousin Elizabeth. The latter, enlightened by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, recognised in Mary the Mother of her Saviour. Mary chants her canticle of joy, gratitude, and love, and tarries three months with Elizabeth.

We must picture to ourselves, secondly, the places, the valleys, and the mountains, then the house of Zachary, and the persons there present, Mary, Zachary, and Elizabeth. Let us then ask the grace of knowing our Lord entirely in His Mother's womb, to learn the better to love Him.

Let us glance first at the acts,—Mary sets out without delay. Yet it would seem that judging by the laws of Nature, she must needs take rest, and how much did her heart yearn to retire into solitude near her God, Whom she had just conceived. Still she sets out, she leaves everything, she grows weary. Why this inconvenience? why this visit? Why need she grow weary? Why indeed? To console, to comfort, to sanctify, to serve! That is why. Our Lord came on earth only with this end; Mary had understood her mission of mercy, and like Him she devoted herself to it. She sets out because she knows that she bears with her benediction and holiness. She wishes to serve with her Divine Jesus, Who is come to be the Servant of all.

And you too, Sisters, should serve one another, and console one another, and these acts of charity in a community are verily the visits of our Lord to the soul. If then we have fully understood our vocation, we shall always remember that we have been called to serve, to sanctify, and to save, and that this is our life. Let us take care to go in quest of repose, and to be greatly afraid of losing it. Let us turn towards our Lord to-day, and ask Him for the true spirit of the Visitation, which may be always translated by one word,—charity, devotion.

Let us hear the words. What is it that is said in this holy house by persons filled with the spirit of God, and in the midst of whom God dwells. And Jesus was there too, Mary bore Him with her. What is it that is said by Mary, Elizabeth, and Zachary? What discourses! what sweet joy! what charity! what happiness! Oh! how all these hearts celebrate the benefits of God! Then we hear words of humility. Elizabeth enlightened by the Holy Spirit, cries:—"Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke i. 43). Then Mary in her sublime canticle, which may so fittingly be called the triumph of her humility, exalts the mercy of God, "Who hath regarded the humility of His handmaid". If God loves the humble, well may He Himself be called

the God of humility. Behold Jesus in His Mother's womb. Elizabeth addressing Mary, continues :—
 “ For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy ” (Luke i. 44). And Mary cries in her admirable canticle :—“ My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour ”. And again :—“ He hath exalted the humble ”. These two sentiments are found together in Mary's canticle,—humility, and the joy of the soul.

Returning to ourselves, but always peaceably, Sisters, we must now apply ourselves to two things,—to obliterate self in humility, and to glorify God in joy of soul.

O day of the Visitation,—day blessed, a thousand times blessed !—because, let us not forget it, our Lord visits us all in the person of His Precursor. And the religious life itself may also be well considered as the perpetual visit of our Lord to a blessed family.

Whilst recognising ourselves as altogether unworthy of receiving this Divine visit, let us say with Mary, in sharing the sentiments of her heart :—“ My soul doth magnify the Lord. He hath exalted the humble ” (Luke i. 46-52).

Daughters of Saint Theresa, you must always celebrate in your chants these two things,—the

glory of God and our own nothingness. You must glorify God Who hath done great things. He hath done very great things for you, the greatest of all things, your vocation, by which He guides you to perfection. But what have we done? Nothing, nothing, nothing. Mary was humble, and Elizabeth inspired from on high, cried out:—"Blessed art thou among women". O Mary, the Lord hath blessed thee, and His blessings have raised thee above the work of His hands.

But it is time to see the persons, and to study the virtues practised in the house of Zachary. We can count three : first, devotion ; secondly, concord uniting all hearts ; thirdly, constancy.

First, you see Mary as the type of devotion ; she sacrifices herself without reserve for three months through charity, loving, obliging, serving ; she even sacrifices the repose of her union with God, and that for the souls about her. What an example is the example of Mary to follow in the religious life ! To sacrifice herself for others, to disregard herself, to be always ready to serve and console others, and to sacrifice that which she held most dear, her very repose with God, for the good of others. There must be no *I* in a community,—nothing for self. To devote oneself to others is true zeal.

Secondly, union, concord. In this divine life

where persons are united together for the love of God, there reigns peace and concord, no repugnance, no angry word, no bitterness, but always benevolence and charity. How touching it is to behold these two mothers, these two sons united in love for God, united in zeal! What sublime language in this hidden and mysterious union! In a community, concord is also the union of hearts; it is peace and joy. O happy and holy union of souls to pray, to sanctify, and to console! Verily, it is a grace, a great grace to ask for.

Lastly, constancy. You see Mary again; she tarries three months with her cousin Elizabeth; she does not spare her time, she tarries three months. And why all that time? To give pleasure to Elizabeth, and to communicate grace unto her, since grace abided with Mary. How admirable is the virtue of constancy, which never says:—"That is enough!" No, it is not enough! There must be no limits; it must be all as God wills. We must not even say, "It is enough," in our desire to see God, and to possess Him. We must not be too anxious for the happy moment to arrive when we can leave this earth, even though we may be often tempted to sigh for it; we should await the coming of God with devotion; and He will come when we have done all the good we were capable

of doing. Until then always,—labour and zeal to answer to our vocation !

Let us conclude, Sisters, by saying that this mystery will enlighten you on the needs of your soul, and that your practical knowledge thereof will enable you with Mary to follow, to imitate, and to love our Lord.

FIFTH DAY. .

EXERCISE I.

MEDITATION ON OUR LORD IN THE DESERT

SISTERS, we must bear in mind that some time after His baptism and before beginning His apostolic career, our Lord, moved by the Spirit,—that is to say, by the Holy Ghost,—withdrew into the desert, where he observed a fast of forty days and forty nights. He dwelt, as the Gospel tells us, in the midst of beasts. He was thrice tempted by the devil, who little knew him. The tempter approaching Him at first, said :—“If Thou art the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread”. And you know the admirable answer of our Lord :—“Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God”. You know that the devil prepared two other snares in two horrible

proposals, and that our Lord always confounded him with His Divine Wisdom. In fine, after this threefold temptation, the devil retired in confusion, and angels hovered round our Lord, and ministered unto Him. You will then picture to yourselves this desert, this vast and silent solitude, and you will ask for the grace,—always the same—of intimately knowing our Lord, in order to love Him more than ever, and to keep His enemy, the devil, far away from you.

You shall consider three things in this mystery of our Lord :—First,—the preparation, that is to say, the solitude of the desert and the fast ; Secondly,—the temptation ; Thirdly,—the consolation.

First,—Jesus alone in the desert with beasts and Satan. Solitude, fast, and prayer are the preparations which our Lord makes against temptation. He wishes to set us the example, and to show us that it is against the just and unworldly man that the devil looses himself with more fury and tenacity of purpose. Solitude, fast, and prayer,—there indeed is the life of Carmel. Oh ! Sisters, be faithful unto it. Prayer above all things, and constant prayer, is the preparation which our Lord expects of you in everything that He wishes to do with you, or by you. It is the better preparation ;

it is the action of the Holy Ghost on the soul. But do not forget that the soul in solitude is liable to temptation. So it will be for you in the silence of your solitude, in your desert. But courage, fear not ; you are prepared for fighting, you shall be also prepared for victory !

Secondly,—Temptation. Let us contemplate our Lord far removed from any human being in a desert, in the midst of beasts. And the beasts may well represent to us Satan, that fierce beast, who dares to contemplate our Lord, to approach His Admirable Person, and to offer Him bread, the bread of corruption,—Him, Who is the Glory of the World, and the Benefactor of the Earth. But this spectacle is given us to be our consolation and strength ; for the things which Satan here offers our Lord, the Holy of Holies, he will present to us likewise. We shall be tempted by pride, tempted by sensuality. Our Lord has vouchsafed to undergo this humiliation in order to give us a lesson of consolation, and an example to follow ; and with precept and example, we earn victory. With what energy He repels the tempter ! He does not reason with him, but says :—“Get thee behind Me, Satan, for it is written, *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God,*” &c. O fundamental and encouraging words,

which reveal to us the basis and the structure of our faith ! It is written in the Book of Truth Whom I ought to adore, Whom I ought to love, what I ought to do ; therefore, I do not reason with the Spirit of Lies, but I believe. It is written that we shall be never tempted beyond our strength ; this is an article of faith, which we must believe. Whatever temptation we experience, we shall have victory always, if we ask for it ; for God is faithful, He never abandons a soul, and in solitude above all He is with her, and fights with her and on her behalf. So you too, Sisters, blessing Him, loving Him, and adoring Him, must also endeavour in your solitude to fight with your good Master, and Satan shall be conquered. It is true he goes only for a time, he will return,—but always to be conquered !

Thirdly,—Consolation. Satan withdraws to a distance, and angels take his place. Observe, Sisters, it is after prolonged solitude in the desert in the midst of beasts, after a threefold temptation, that our Lord calls angels unto Him. Such is the law,—whatever God reserves to us, pain, suffering, temptation ; whatever happens to our soul, there is the compensation on the part of God ; so it is always, always. Angels shall be sent to minister to this tried, though faithful, soul ; because God is the God of all consolation, and He tries the soul by

temptation ; after the conflict He hearkens to the afflicted soul with the riches and pleasures of His magnificence.

And angels ministered unto Him, and set before Him a feast. And a feast is set before us likewise ; a feast which brings us heavenly joy, the feast of the Blessed Eucharist, a divine repast served by angels ; this is our strength, our life, divine strength, divine life, and against which Satan can do nothing. But we know well that this Bread of the Strong was given us here below only to excite us still to conflict, and to assure us of victory with God always. Consolation bespeaks trial ; temptation will then return. But at length life will come to a close, and then what joys after the trial ! What ineffable happiness ! Come, Sisters, we must be brave. Let us pray to our Lord to obtain courage ; let us pray without ceasing until we come face to face with God and His angels in heaven.

EXERCISE II.

MEDITATION ON THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

Beloved Sisters, this morning we may recall to mind some passages from the admirable Sermon on

the Mount. There, for the first time, did our Lord disclose His heavenly doctrines. He addressed His disciples, and the crowd that followed Him. We shall take to ourselves the precepts more specially adapted to us.

Let us then recall to mind that our Lord, after His prolonged solitude in the desert, after the temptation to which He vouchsafed to be exposed, after the miracle of Cana in Galilee, withdrew into a mountain, whither a great multitude of people, attracted by His beauty, by His divine grace, by His meekness, by His goodness, and by all the charms of His Adorable Person, followed Him. Let us picture to ourselves our Divine Master in the midst of His disciples, and let us listen to Him pronouncing with majesty and sweetness the eight beatitudes which you know ; then, in the midst of a thousand such graces, let us ask for the special grace of becoming supremely attached to our Lord.

Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are the clean of heart. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake. What words ! And when they come to us from the lips and from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, how attentively should we bear them in mind !

To return to them, Sisters (for here there is an inexhaustible fountain), we shall divide them into two parts, which will enable us to know the two conditions of perfect virtue, the two attributes of God,—power and meekness. But observe, I entreat you, that seven beatitudes belong to meekness, and only one to power. *Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they who mourn. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the clean of heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake.* You see it is throughout patience, peace, humility,—in a word, meekness. This is the teaching of our Lord. But it is also His Spirit. And so it should be ours likewise.

Now, Sisters, have we entered into it well? Are we poor in heart and in spirit? Have we a humble, meek, and patient soul? Are we indulgent and merciful? Have we an upright heart? Are we the children of peace? Whence come difficulties and trouble from time to time? What is all this? And do we love suffering? Do we accept it with a smiling face? Do we support it calmly, peacefully, and patiently? *Blessed are they who suffer!* And if there is suffering for you, religious souls, from time to time (and is it not your inheritance always), remember your holy reformer's meekness

in her different trials, and her amiability in sorrow and continual sickness. Your holy mother used to say with humility :—"Oh ! I know well why I suffer. I would be too great a coward to go in quest of suffering, and to do penance. Our Lord does well to supply me with it in His mercy." And yet she never spared herself. *Blessed are they who suffer.* Let us pause at this sentence, endeavour to taste suffering, and ask of our Lord the grace to make it the food of our lives. Yea, *blessed are they who suffer.*

But then remains the beatitude belonging to power,—*Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice.* That is to say, after perfection, after the end proposed by our vocation. Do we hunger and thirst after justice? Do we hunger and thirst after devotion? Do we hunger and thirst with zeal for the salvation of souls? Do we hunger and thirst after the glory of God? Do we hunger and thirst after the fulfilment of our holy vows? Do we hunger and thirst after the fulfilment of the divine law? Do we hunger and thirst after the end, in a word, proposed to us by our vocation, after the high perfection to which God calls us? Do you and I hunger and thirst after justice? And if we do not hunger, if we do not thirst, let us at least have the desire of doing so; and if we think we

have not even the desire of hungering and thirsting, let us have the desire of the desire, according to the words of the prophet. Yea, Sisters, desire much, ask for thirst for the salvation of souls, for that thirst, that hunger after the glory of God, and perfection, that justice, in a word, which is the proper object of our vocation, and the end of our life.

Behold then the characters of meekness, charity, patience, and suffering, which rule the teachings of our Divine Master ; and likewise power in love of justice. Meekness and power,—these united virtues are the seal of the spirit of God.

In the second place, let us pause at these other words of Jesus :—"So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven". This means that we have all received graces and intellectual faculties capable of conceiving and doing good. And we have not received these gifts for ourselves alone ; their light must shine before men for the glory of God. And has not the Daughter of S. Theresa, the Daughter of Carmel, more than any other, received the most consoling promises, the most precious talents ? Do you make good use of them ? Do you make good use of them in holy prayer, your darkness and your difficulties notwith-

standing? Have you been careful to cultivate this grace of prayer by recollection? Do you edify the eyes that are turned on you, by your modesty, your meekness, your indulgence, and your charity? On beholding you, do they glorify God the Father Who is within us? And yet so it should be. This grace must bear fruit, not that vanity may be drawn therefrom, but in order to make shine in peace with an interior spirit, this treasure which God hath placed in us. Yea, we must show the talents which God has given us, and employ them successfully to soothe and to comfort hearts, and to be the witnesses of our patience and indulgence towards the souls of the poor. Let us then ask that we may make good use of the gifts and graces of our Lord, in order that He may bless us.

Lastly, in the third place, we shall take another passage where our Lord said that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, and to perfect it. This sublime perfection of the law our Lord teaches us in what is simply counsel; no rash word, no out-of-place desire,—to love our enemies, to give the little remaining to us to one who has acted unjustly towards us, to turn the other cheek to him who smote us, and so forth. What perfection! But there is yet another thing for the religious soul,—the vows, and the rule. Can we say that we have

fulfilled the rules to which we are bound? Have we fulfilled the law of our holy vows? this law of the perfection of Carmel? this practice of the better virtues, this law of holy desire and constant prayer? Where are we with regard to it? Can we say with our Lord that we have been faithful to the last iota?

Have you answered to the desire of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who seeks perfect souls, or at least who seeks those who endeavour to become perfect? He seeks them, He asks for them. So much does He love souls! You know that for one soul that is devoted to the solitude of the cloister, buried from the world, removed from every eye, with the sole desire of seeking only the perfection of devotion, God would overthrow kingdoms: He stirs up the heavens and the earth. And what did He not do for S. Theresa?

There must be perfect souls in the Church of God. What could we do without them in the sacred ministry? Oh! Sisters, how great is your mission! But if you lag behind, you take from the common treasure instead of adding to it. What an account have we to render if we fail to profit by grace! Let us then humble ourselves, Sisters, and humble ourselves exceedingly in our shortcomings, in our faithlessness. This is the time to hunger

and thirst. Let us ask that the light be made shine, and that we may answer to our holy vocation in all its perfection, and with the fullest devotion. Our Lord calls you to this consummation of perfection in your thoughts, in your desires, in your whole life, to make but one with Him.

EXERCISE III.

CONFERENCE ON PEACE.

Beloved Sisters, we can at this moment recall a sentence of our Lord's, which is not only a consolation, but a teaching, a doctrine, and a promise. It is that great sentence which He repeated frequently, and chiefly at the moment when He consummated His sacrifice:—" *My peace I leave you, My peace I give you*".

We can take up this sentence, and add to it:—" *I shall not leave you orphans*". That is to say, I will not leave you fatherless, without consolation. These words, Sisters, were spoken for you. Wherefore, endeavour to estimate to yourselves a little the value of this divine promise, when you are in presence of our Lord.

Could it be possible that these words should not be fulfilled in a faithful soul? Do we not know that we all need this peace, this spiritual calm, whether it be the time of trial or not, to see the light without which all is trouble within us? And when in two days the time for taking your resolutions will come, you must then, as you ought now, ask for peace; it is the condition of choosing, the preparation for obtaining; in a word, peace is the great good of the soul.

Peace may, it is true, be bitter, but bitter or not, we ought to ask for it. It is certain, and it is a precept transmitted to us by the saints and found in Holy Writ, that in a soul God is, by His own proper action, the cause and the author of peace. Yea, the very character of God in a soul that does not oppose obstacles, in a well-disposed soul, the action of God by Himself, or by His good angel, is to give peace. You have peace by being well directed; be assured that God approves of your aim, that He has blessed it, and that He is infallibly the Author of it. And, on the other hand, in a well-disposed soul whose intentions are straight, the devil can only be the author of trouble, because he cannot do what God does, he cannot give peace.

There is besides, in the bottom of the soul, a still

greater depth to which the devil cannot penetrate ; God has reserved it to Himself for His sanctuary. The devil may exert himself, make a noise, paralyse the imagination, and weary by temptation ; but in this superior part of the soul peace dwells, because this depth belongs to God alone. We may therefore have peace in the midst of pain and temptation. Oh ! Sisters, ask for this inestimable peace, pursue it at every instant by prayer, and guard the entrance to your soul carefully,—watch !

And when I speak of peace, I do not speak of sensible consolation, but of the peace of God, of that peace which cannot come otherwise. Whatever passes in the depths of your being, you must say to our Lord :—"I do not refuse the cross. I do not refuse suffering. I do not ask for consolation. But give me peace, give me calm, in order that I may know where I am to walk ; then dispose of me according to Thy will,—but oh ! give me peace."

Beloved Sisters, we have said that the devil cannot give peace. In truth, there is a false peace that comes from him, but how far it is from the true peace ! For example, he may make us believe at prayer, in order to weaken our vigilance and our good desires, that we have nothing more to do but to rest ; he may make us taste a certain calm, by

which he seeks to lull us to slumber in the practice of virtue (and he holds out this snare chiefly to faithless and lukewarm souls); but the trail of the serpent must appear, it will appear. The imperfection and the laxity will soon be seen. He may persuade a soul that she has acquired her measure of perfection,—that she is doing very well. False peace; we should always be satisfied with God—never with ourselves. Peace should be stamped with self-contempt and true humility. And of this peace the devil can never be the author.

We know well that we must not seek peace in sensible consolation; this would be to act like a child who knows not the value of solid virtue. It is in the straight way that leads to Calvary, that we must seek peace in contempt of self.

When we are on this way we must avoid reasoning and uneasiness; we must abandon ourselves unreservedly like a child. But we must unite the strength of maturer years with this childlike simplicity; we must desire peace above all things, and wage war against every obstacle, and abandon everything that turns us aside from peace. Peace is always the partner of goodwill. Goodwill it is that fosters and favours peace. And we learn this from the angels' canticle :—" *Peace to men of good will!* "

Let us too, Sisters, foster and favour this goodwill ; it is the surest token of the presence of a good conscience ; and then fear not, advance always, and never look back. Let the past not trouble you. Have confidence. When we have the happiness to receive absolution of our sins, everything is blotted out, the past exists no longer, there is nothing save the present any more. To say,—“ I have been faithless, I cannot recover lost ground,” is as if you said,—“ God who created me once is not powerful enough to create me anew ”. What is this but a want of faith ? Instead of disquieting ourselves by reason of the past, turn to God, and cast yourselves into His Creative Hands, and say :—“ O Lord, give me a new heart, and a new soul ”. After this there must be no return to self ; remembrances, impressions, temptations, are no longer anything but obstacles ; the soul goes on, and goes on for ever. Whither does she go ? She knows not, she reasons not ; but she goes on for ever. A soul it is that becomes foolish in order to be wise ; and then peace to this soul of goodwill !

We have said already, Sisters, that the necessary condition for enjoying peace is the accord of our will with God's. But, it may be objected, sometimes we do not enjoy peace, and yet we will all

that God wills. In this case we must look and examine ; is there not some weak side ? Is there not some faithlessness ? To will what God wills, and to stop there, weak and apathetic, is, not to have a good will, above all things in your vocation, where so much more is needed. What then are we to do ? To pray, to pray exceedingly, and to conquer self ; for it is impossible that a soul that will labour in prayer and by prayer to conquer self, and will be unwilling to admit into her head a certain indolent and apathetic joy,—it is impossible, I say, that such a soul will not experience divine strength within her. It may cost her something. Yea, truly it may cost her something not to abandon herself to her own weakness, and not to forsake her good resolutions, even though she may have despised the cost the day before ; but patience ! God will come. Once more, I say, He will come if you persevere in prayer and good-will.

It is true, and we see it every day, that persons of upright and simple will suffer pains, and cruel pains, and there is nothing more certain ; but it is a trial which God in His mercy sends them ; He permits the action of the enemy who bears trouble into the soul,—this is his weapon. You have only to consult the blessed books of your holy mother

elsewhere, she says to you :—" You shall have severe and poignant trials ; but in the midst of these trials, peace rests in the depths of the soul. Do we not see our Lord in the Garden of Olives experiencing the most violent agony ? *Father ! Father ! if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me !* But He grows not discouraged, and He adds : *Not my will, but Thine be done.*"

Wherefore then, in your life of prayer, you have, and you shall have always, to undergo trials ; you shall be tempted like our Lord in the desert. God wills it so in order to put your strength to the test, in order to encompass you with His benefits, in order to purify you. He wills it also in order to humiliate and to encourage you. Yea, Sisters, in your inability, in your powerlessness, when you say :—" I can do nothing," you should add with S. Paul :—" I can do everything in Him who strengthens me". No, I can do nothing, nothing of myself ; but with God I can do, and I will do, everything. This is courage, and God will reward it.

We may be very willing to devote ourselves to prayer, and to occupy ourselves with the better things, but only for our own satisfaction. Then God puts us to the test, and the soul should unite herself generously to Him or the grasp of sorrow.

Come, courage and goodwill ! We must not regard the hour, nor count the minutes. We desire our deliverance in order to pray more fervently, and to enjoy peace ; we are deceived. We would be delivered from the cross ; but do you not know that trials beget patience ? And when we suffer patiently, we wait and we hope ; we have peace ! To suffer and pray is to believe, is to unite ourselves to Jesus Christ in prayer.

Come then, Sisters, come to the Feet of this Good Master, and you shall hear Him say to you :—" My child, My peace I leave you, My peace I give you ". And you shall pray, and be devout ; and you shall ask for peace in sacrifice, for that is the truest and the best peace. There, I am sure, is the blessing that is destined for you.

EXERCISE IV.

REPETITION OF THE TWO FIRST EXERCISES OF THE DAY.

Beloved Sisters, it is recommended to make what are called repetitions, that is, to return to certain points in the preceding meditations or con-

temptations. We shall now endeavour to do this in the Temptation in the Desert, and the admirable Sermon on the Mount.

Endeavour to be as recollected as possible in offering to God all your intentions, and in asking of Him the grace of due observance, so as to do nothing that may turn your soul from the right way which leadeth unto perfection and sanctity.

Turn to our Lord again, and ask Him to grant you to know Him in the desert, alone, praying, fasting, and vouchsafing to be tempted for love of you. And in this repetition, remember three things :—

First,—The inevitable necessity of temptation.

Secondly,—The precept of solitary prayer, accompanied by penance, which our Lord gives us in order to obtain grace.

Thirdly,—The infallibility of victory.

First,—The inevitable necessity of temptation.

This is shown everywhere :—“ My son,” says the wise man, “ when thou comest to the service of God, prepare thy soul for temptation”. And again to Tobias :—“ Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee”. Elsewhere it is said :—“ What doth he know, that hath not been tried ?” Our Lord vouchsafed to undergo this necessity, He vouch-

safed to suffer temptation in order to make Himself like unto us, and to make us understand that when He had been tempted, we could not avoid being tempted. And if there be elsewhere, religious souls, a life which God destines for temptation in order to conduct it to the greatest good, to the greatest gifts, that life is yours. Then withdraw not, but accept, accept everything.

Secondly,—Solitary prayer and frequent fast are the true means of acquiring heavenly grace. In the desert of Carmel, whither you have retired into solitude, how much need is there that everything within you should be shut out from the world, and that in nothing should the world penetrate to your blessed retreat ! And moreover, in the desert of your soul, guard yourselves against the beasts that may glide therein,—impressions, passions, by which we are, alas ! too often brought to the level of the beast.

And likewise fast, mortification in health, and patience in infirmity. Then it is no longer fast, God does not will it. Patience ! But whether in health or in sickness, we must always love fast and mortification, accompanied by prayer.

But we must pray always and at all times. Oh ! here we can arm ourselves with patience. We must pray, and often, how many obstacles we encounter !

Then say :—"I am alone with my God in the desert, and dead to the world ; O my God, I shall wait as long as it shall be pleasing to Thee, but I will be faithful to prayer".

Thirdly,—Our Lord in the desert assures us of the infallibility of victory. Yea, victory is certain, this is an article of faith ; we shall never be tempted beyond our strength. The devil can only have as much power over us as we let him have, he cannot conquer us in spite of ourselves, still less cause our death. Courage, therefore, let us fight with our Lord, let us say with Him to the tempter :—"Man liveth not by bread alone". And then, Sisters, do not forget that the great means of conquering is to act by opposite ways ; to oppose humility to pride, mortification to sensuality, and so of the rest. We are weak, and we must, therefore, yield sometimes ; but patience ! patience ! self-compassion ! let us fear not, and be never troubled. When shall we live in faith ? What are impressions and trials ? All that I feel is nothing, absolutely nothing ?

We may now recall to mind the admirable Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus Christ gives us teaching and example of the better and the purer virtues. When we remember that it is God Who has spoken, our Saviour, the Devoted Friend of

souls, He whose burning love desires a thousand times to save us! What has He not taught us in these admirable beatitudes? Two things chiefly, patience and peace. *Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they who mourn. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the clean of heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are they who suffer.* What words! and it is to us that He addresses them; His word is ever present, centuries are nothing to God; yea, it is to us He speaks, let us hear Him, and become attached to all the virtues of the Heart of Jesus. Let us become attached to poverty of spirit and humility, which detach us from all things; to the meekness which makes the soul enduring, which makes her bear all things, and forget every sorrow. *Blessed are the clean of heart.* God alone and no other—this is purity of heart. And then the tears and sufferings which our Lord blesses, oh! if we had His Spirit, how we would understand them! how we would love them! Let us not forget the ardour of zeal. *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice* That is to say, that justice which fulfils all that is agreeable unto God, that hunger which establishes the kingdom of God in ourselves and others. We have seen this morning that 'all is comprised in this hunger and thirst—zeal for charity,

desire for the glory of God, for those better gifts, for our greatest perfection—all in fine.

We must not leave the ground fallow ; we must sow, and hunger and thirst after the harvest ; and if we do not hunger and thirst, if we are still cold, let us ask of God to kindle in us the fire of His burning charity, which will give us the consummation of purest virtue, the consummation of holiness in Jesus Christ ; and then abandon your heart to the zeal of holy love, to the virtues of meekness, patience, peacemaking—virtues difficult, I acknowledge, to practise, but virtues which are the strength of the soul. Ask for them, desire them ; to desire is to begin to practise already ; if we do not desire, if we do not help ourselves, if we do not say that we want many things, but that God can give us much, what then are we capable of ? Pray, Sisters, to Mary Immaculate, and she will obtain everything for you from the meek and humble Heart of Jesus.

SIXTH DAY (I.).

EXERCISE I.

FIRST MEDITATION ON THE TWO STANDARDS.

BELOVED Sisters, every day of the retreat is important and precious to you ; yet it is true to say that in proportion as we advance, we must use more preparation in order to know the will of God towards us better, so as that we may practise it, amend our lives, and remodel ourselves. This is the day proposed for the knowledge of the will of God towards us, and for the adoption of resolutions towards its fulfilment.

But as it is more than ever important to be able to distinguish the spirit of Jesus Christ from the spirit of His capital enemy, S. Ignatius proposes the Meditation on the Two Standards to this end. You shall therefore ask again, beloved Sisters, that everything within you may tend in an orderly

manner to the glory of God, and the perfection of your souls.

You will then picture to yourself two camps,—Babylon and Jerusalem ; in the one you behold your enemy the devil ; in the other, Jesus Christ, your Friend and Master. You will ask for the grace of light the better to know and to discern the tricks of the enemy, and to protect yourself therefrom ; the better also to know the secret of the true life, and to follow it. Oh ! it is here that you must abandon yourselves to holy and burning desires, as far as it may be possible to you.

In the first place, consider your enemy on his throne of fire, spreading noise and terror everywhere around. Hear the instructions which he gives his ministers ; he sends them everywhere, irrespective of the holiest places. He commands them to bear disturbance and trouble in their train, and to catch souls, without any exception whatever, in their perfidious net. “Go,” he says to them, “go about, everywhere, endeavour to enrol souls, and to keep them with you by love of riches, and love of pleasure and honours.” And, in effect, we see these limbs of Satan, and Satan himself, catching souls in the net of worldly honours and vain glory, to lead them to pride, and from pride to the abyss of every crime and despair. Oh ! let us flee courageously every-

thing ever so little resembling the snares of the enemy. Ask our Lord to keep you far removed from all that may flatter the senses,—consolations, dispensations, and corrections, which are not necessary; to pluck from your heart all desire for the esteem of creatures, all sensual love; to turn you away for ever from the path of pride, and the thousand ways leading thereto. For the spirit of Satan can penetrate even into Carmel, and that in a very subtle manner,—so well does it harmonize with our natural inclinations. Let us then defy an enemy who knows our tendencies so well,—our love of imperfection and vanity. You know the comparison employed by the Masters of the Spiritual Life, in order to make us understand the action of Satan in us :—“ It is given to Satan,” they say, “ to use our imagination as if it were a harp, to press on it every touch, and to draw from it every sound ”.

Now turn your eyes on the peaceful camp at Jerusalem. We behold our Lord sitting calmly there, beautiful, indulgent, good, meek, merciful. He is seeking devout souls to establish His kingdom. He calls them sweetly and forcibly, and what does He say to them? He speaks to them of poverty and detachment from sensual things. This is His teaching :—Love poverty, love contempt. *Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they who mourn.*

Blessed are they who suffer persecution. Detachment from all earthly things, then, the desire of receiving insults,—yea, nothing more than this to imitate and to follow Him, and to fight Satan. The desire of receiving insults is nothing but true humility which consists itself in the love of God, joined to the knowledge of ourselves.

And this is our Lord's pure spirit,—Himself, His very self !

Oh ! we may not, perhaps, be able to attain this spirit and to follow Him perfectly all at once ; but we should pray exceedingly. We should earnestly ask for the love of contempt in order to practise it, not only when we cannot refuse to do so without being guilty of a fault, but even when there would not be a shadow of imperfection in refusing, for it is enough for us that the glory of God demands it.

Address Mary, ask her to keep you under the covering of poverty and contempt, under the standard of the love of her Divine Son. Then ask our Lord, who is the culmination of all that is good, to remodel you, to transform you, to regenerate you. And think not that it is a little thing for you to ask this grace of knowing and following the spirit of our Lord. Were you to spend a whole day at this single request it would not be too much.

Excite yourselves likewise with the desire of

following our Good Saviour in His sufferings and insults. Embrace this true humility to its widest extent. Oh ! fear not to repeat this prayer to the Divine Master, to God the Father, in the most pressing manner ; insist on, and persevere in your demand. You shall be heard at any cost ; this is what the glory of God, the care of your own perfection, and the salvation of souls require of you.

EXERCISE II.

REPETITION OF THE PRECEDING MEDITATION.

Beloved Sisters, let us then prepare ourselves to know perfectly the special will of God towards our souls, in order that we may fulfil it. This is the day of preparation during which you ought to apply all your faculties, all the powers of your soul, to seek the true sense, to penetrate into the spirit of the counsels of Jesus Christ, and thence into the true sense of your vocation, which, as you know well, is a call to perfection. There is a principle without which there is nothing solid or durable, and that is, that we advance therein in proportion as we renounce ourselves, and strip ourselves of what we

are, of our personal interests, of our love of ease and pleasure, in such wise that it may be the love of our Lord which transforms, remodels, and operates a new creation within us. And this, the eve of the day on which you shall have to take your resolutions, and to determine the manner in which you are to serve our Lord, is also a day of special penance (according to the measure of strength and of obedience) for drawing down on you the graces of God. Verily, we may wonder that having once perceived and recognised this spirit, which is called the Standard of our Lord, we do not embrace it. And why? What a surprising thing that we do not hearken to the voice of our Lord, and that we hearken, while we ought not, to our own voice, for we must not forget to go to God, and to go to God alone!

Let us return, Sisters, to the meditation on the Two Standards, and let us hearken to the voice of the Lord, saying to us:—“*He who is not with Me, is against Me*”. Cast a rapid glance on Babylon, the city of confusion. There we have an enemy, tricky, clever, always on the watch, never at rest; a sworn enemy of God and souls, above all, religious souls; and when he sees virtue lessen, and labour towards perfection relax, it is a moment of victory for him. At all times and in all

places, at the most sacred moments, Lucifer is acting against God and us, against truth, true welfare, peace ; he is inspiring us with sophisms, and provoking us to ideas which savour of earth and the world, which awake nature and the love of riches and prosperity within us, and which excite in us the desire of honour—human pride. This is the character of Satan's mission ; it is the contrary of the spirit of Jesus Christ. Are we ever so little willing to rank ourselves under His standard, or to give Him the least little portion ! To have Satan for our chief is to put ourselves under him, and what baseness is under Satan ! And yet what do we do when we stop in a cowardly manner in our efforts towards perfection ? We are contenting the devil who rejoices, and if we could listen, we would hear him laugh. And behold where we have placed ourselves at certain moments of our life. But we are speaking too much of Satan. Let us pray to Mary, to Mary who is his mortal enemy, to guard us from his snares, and to take us herself under her protection, under the standard of her Divine Son.

Let us go to Jesus Christ, He is calling us, Sisters. "*Come to Me.*" He requires us to be zealous for the salvation of souls, He wishes us to have a heart like the Apostles ; your holy mother was an apostle. He calls you then, Daughters of

S. Theresa, for the welfare of souls, and for the support of His Church. "*Come to Me.*" If He were Himself to appear to you this moment to repeat these words, your vocation could not be more certain ; but how would you answer His invitation ? Prostrate at His feet, and lovingly and respectfully kissing the hem of His garment, you would give yourselves entirely to Him. Thus answer, therefore, to this summons.

Our Lord's summons is peaceful and humble, but it is likewise powerful. And where can this summons be more inviting, more pressing, nay, even more beseeching, than at Carmel ? Come, Sisters, our Lord seeks to establish Himself in you ; He wishes you to be generous souls in order to fight and to conquer with Him. What must you do for this ? You know well that the perfection which He asks of you, and which you embraced, is poverty,—poverty under the name of detachment and humility, poverty which is one of your holy vows. Oh, love it, and be intimately attached to it. Take what you get indifferently, and say always :—"This is too much for me. I have nothing ; I am poor." How excellent is this one virtue ! But nature raves and grows rebellious,—pray, therefore, pray ; but above all things reason not, so as not to give the enemy a victory. The Devil can do nothing against prayer,

because over prayer he has no power. He cannot take part against it; but it is not the same with reasoning, for Satan is a most clever sophist, a most clever rhetorician; take care of him, and pray.

Then love contempt. Ask, Sisters, for that which is contrary to self-love, to vanity, to the esteem of creatures,—contrary, in order that it may be *for* our Lord. “*He who is not with Me is against Me.*” With prayer, and, by its means, with the desire of contempt, we reach true humility. But we must always remember that the desire of humility is not enough; it is not difficult to desire it, but to practise, to accept, to go in quest of humiliation is another thing. Humility itself is sweet, very sweet; but it is a fruit, a product, and we must labour and work for a long time, and pray above all things before gathering it. For the rest, we always have this condition in prayer, that success will come when it is the will of God. To desire detachment, love of contempt, is well, and we ought to do so, but we must not desire them except inasmuch as God is willing to bestow them on us, and not to a greater degree than He Himself wills. Let us labour, it is our lot; but victory depends on God; He gives it if He wills, and when He wills.

Before closing your meditation, place yourselves in the heart of the peaceful city, at the feet of our

Lord. There drink, and become impregnated with His spirit ; all else is vanity, cowardice, the counsels of self-love, the sophistry of the devil. Abridge nothing of the greatness of your vocation ; recall incessantly to mind your holy mother's end in establishing her reform. Yea ! you are apostles, you are victims, and our Lord hath chosen you ; He hath vouchsafed to make you devout souls to co-operate in His work of redemption.

Offer, Sisters, an urgent prayer to Mary, begging of her to obtain for you the grace of walking faithfully under the standard of poverty, humility, and contempt, then you will go to our Lord through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and, finally, to God the Father, and you will say with hearts burning with zeal, "*Behold me, Lord*".

EXERCISE III.

CONFERENCE ON THE THREE DEGREES OF HUMILITY.

Sisters, in order to dispose ourselves to know well and to estimate well the Divine will, and the means to be taken in order to fulfil it in a solid and enduring manner, we must recall to mind all that

is calculated to unite us to the spirit of our Lord, on which you have just been meditating,—a spirit which is eminently fitted to make us enter into the light of faith, and to crush our natural reason beneath its yoke.

Behold, then, some rules of election, or dispositions with which we ought begin this day.

First, as a fundamental disposition, let us endeavour to find and to keep peace, and then we have full and entire freedom of spirit.

Second disposition,—To despise all that is not faith, pure faith, and instant prayer to obtain light.

The third disposition, and the best and the sweetest of all, is to dwell in our Lord's heart for true and solid motives of love. We should not, therefore, allow our heart to follow its own bent, human affections. Nothing of the kind ; all that is not our Lord alone is bad, and ought to be rejected. And, Sisters, how could you be attached to any of the things of earth,—you who have left them all ? It is impossible. We must above all things lay bare ourselves ; for to cling to our own will, to our own lights, is to choose darkness, and there is nothing more dangerous to the soul. Place before your eyes the end of your vocation ; and in peace and grace ask yourselves :—“ What have I wished ? What did I come to seek here ? ” And we must

answer these questions, and to answer them we must take the best point,—God alone ! The highest perfection, such as it should be at Carmel, such as S. Theresa desired, is what I have come to seek. Everything else is of no consequence to me. But do not forget that your predominant disposition should be the love of our Lord, no other motive can conduct you to your end.

We find in the *Book of Exercises* a very useful consideration, and one to which S. Ignatius attaches great importance. He even says that a whole day might be spent in helping one's self to make a good choice. This principle *par excellence* which we should have engraved on our hands and in our hearts in letters of gold, so as never to forget, is that we advance, only in so much as we renounce ourselves, and strip ourselves of our personal interests. It is only by this way that we arrive at true humility, and this disposition, more or less perfect, S. Ignatius explains to us in his consideration on the three degrees of humility.

The principle on which this consideration is based is this :—We should bow down so profoundly before God in order to fulfil His holy will, that we should be ready to embrace everything to submit to Him. In effect, if there is anything that may be called humility, it is certainly this perfect submission,

which renders our will conformable to the will of God, and removes everything that is opposed to Him.

From this point of departure let us make the following reflections on the first degree of humility. We should never admit the thought or the deliberation to offend God by mortal sin, even though by so doing there was question of preserving our life, to which man is so strongly attached. Surely, Sisters, this is a disposition on which you have entered long since, but remember that no matter what we are, no matter what may be our perfection, we shall always have to make progress in horror of sin, in order to have a clean and pure conscience like the saints. God who demands of you purity unalloyed, wishes you to go far in this way. Behold to what a point S. Theresa reached on this path, and pray God that you may be made more and more perfect in submission to Him,—a thing so precious, and at the same time so necessary.

The first degree acquired, we pass on to the second. What is it? Oh, Sisters! a soul profoundly bowed down before God arrives at having no will of her own, no taste for one thing beyond another, but always the simple will of God. And if she has no especial or decisive reason for preferring one thing to another, because the glory of God is

not clearly manifested unto her, she has no will, but she waits. Take for example, health and sickness, both are equal in the sight of God ; she may not perceive at the moment which is the more conducive to God's glory ; therefore, she is indifferent, she desires health no more than suffering.

We must also, Sisters, have this holy indifference in all that comes to us from creatures. Honour and contempt present themselves ; if I see that I can glorify God by honour, then I accept honour ; but if I glorify Him more by contempt, I choose contempt. And if the will of God is not clearly manifested unto me, I rest indifferent. But wherefore ? God chooseth not, and should you choose ? God prefers not, and should you prefer ? But then it is not God whom you seek, but yourself, and this is egotism. Neither is it truth that you seek, for truth is the choice of God. Behold then the second degree of humility, to seek nothing, to desire nothing, an even balance. Thou art good, indifference ! And furthermore, Sisters, pray exceedingly, and reason not. What signify reasonings compared with the loss of your way ? Pray that you may remain in the spirit of our Lord's words, that one advances in proportion as one renounces one's self.

To what a sublime degree did not your holy mother carry this virtue of indifference ? The

reform which had cost her so much, and which she loved so dearly, she would have abandoned without a moment's regret, if obedience, which was for her the manifestation of the divine will, required. Therefore practise perfect indifference. Adopt to-day, Sisters, more than ever the generous resolution of not deliberating on a single venial sin ; I do not say consenting, but deliberating. For example, discouragement, impatience, want of charity, take hold of me ; oh ! may such things keep far away from me because they are displeasing to God, and therefore I have a horror of them. But it may be objected that these are imperfections against which we cannot defend ourselves. Undoubtedly, we are so weak. But we must never consent to venial sin. With imperfections we must be humble and have patience ; we shall have them always ; and in proportion as we advance in years and acquire greater experience we shall see more than ever how much need there is of commiseration and charity for souls. Yea, there is great need of kindness and indulgence. We are so weak, so inconstant, so miserable, and, alas ! we love our misery.

But this is not all ; when you are a daughter of S. Theresa, when you are a victim as you are, and when you are devoted to souls, there is a better thing. You know what our Lord has done and

suffered. Well, suppose He questions you in the depths of your heart, and says :—"What wilt thou do? To what place wilt thou belong? Behold what I have done. Yet, there will not be more glory for you in humility, contempt, suffering, than in consolation and repose." So speaks our Lord in manifesting to you His life of poverty, humility, and suffering. What will you say to Him in your turn, always supposing that the glory of God is not manifest, or preponderating to one side more than another. Would you have the hardihood to say to Him :—"Lord, to be sacrificed, to be humbled, to be immolated is all very well for Thee, but not so for me, and Thou wilt not ask it of me".

No, Sisters, you would not speak thus, you could not. Even though it were equal glory to God and equal happiness for you, you could not. Because He was humbled, you should be humbled; because He was immolated, you should be immolated; because He was crucified, you should be crucified; and you should be crucified, because He was crucified, in order to resemble Him, to follow Him, and to prove to Him your love. "O my God, behold I have chosen poverty and humility, give me the cross, give me suffering, I entreat Thee; I long for it with Thee, like Thee, and for Thee."

Behold what has been proposed as the highest

perfection, pure love of our Lord. Come, Sisters, and say a fervent prayer to ask for this grace. Solicit and study the heart of our Lord, in order that you may be inflamed with the desire of resembling Him. Disquiet yourselves not by reason of your wretchedness; pray, only pray; and establish yourselves above all fear in this supernatural grace. This is what our Lord demands, and, therefore, courage, courage. It is neither beyond your vocation nor your strength: it is in the spirit of your life, in the desires of the heart of our Lord, that you should seek comfort and contentment before all things.

EXERCISE IV.

MEDITATION ON THE THREE CLASSES.

Beloved Sisters, be well assured that we cannot enlighten the depths of our soul too much, and that the best dispositions are never too good, since there is question of seeking what is most pleasing to God. Let us then take up the meditation on the three classes. And since you seek to please our Lord more than ever, ask of Him the grace that everything in you may be for His glory

and service. Then be ye represented standing, with a disposition to wait and ask. Angels and saints are there regarding you. Pray, there is question of obtaining the grace which will lead to the perfection of your soul.

Let us briefly recall to mind the three classes of men to whom S. Ignatius speaks (this is entirely a material thing, a symbol). All three have acquired riches, not exactly by bad means, but yet with motives but little orthodox. Nevertheless, they wish to be saved, and to find God in peace. And the first class, like the two others, wishes to disengage itself from its affection for the wordly goods which it possesses, in order to work for its salvation; but for this end it employs no other means, and is unwilling to undergo any sacrifice. Well, Sisters, in the spiritual order we find likewise souls belonging to the first class; they wish to remove every obstacle, that is to say, every affection or tie which keeps them far removed from God; but how often do they wish without really wishing, because they do not wish to adopt the means of wishing efficaciously! They catch sight of the path in which they must walk to find our Lord, and with Him joy and peace, and yet they follow it not. There is something in their heart, in their poor nature which occupies them, which stops

them. And that is true lukewarmness. This is not indeed, Sisters, what belongs to you, but take care; there are souls who have entered on the religious life with the best, the frankest, the purest dispositions, and it has happened that they have encountered I know not what barrier; first one thing, then another, retains them, and they have paused, and remained in this state up to the time of their death without adopting any means for their spiritual advancement. What shame! what misfortune! that graces, and above all the greatest of all graces, a vocation, should remain uneffectual, that a life should go on fruitless unto eternity without saving souls, without giving glory to God! Ah! it is because they did not burst the ties, because they did not detach themselves from the inclinations of nature. Thank God, Sisters, I speak not of you; but promise yourselves faithfully that as far as you can perceive an obstacle, an affection, or an antipathy in the distance, you will endeavour to dispel it. Say to God that you wish to advance, and that for nothing in the world would you stop at this point.

The second class seeks more than the first to eschew affection for acquired riches—the barrier between it and God; but it is eager for riches for the sake of hoarding them up. And in the spiritual

life likewise, Sisters, there is a class of souls of which this is the portrait. They adopt certain means, but not those that are most repugnant to nature, those that God demands, and there they try, they fritter away their time, and they do nothing. They seek rather to bend God and His grace to them, and not themselves to God. They do not resolve to leave everything to go to Him. They know the better part, and yet they do not adopt it. And why? Because they have not detachment, they have not good will. Let us say again that this soul is not willing to accommodate herself to God, but expects God to accommodate Himself to her. It is sad, very sad! This soul loves not our Lord, she has not decided to choose the better part, she remains faithless. She does not love our Lord. She is not moulded after God's own will, and the Holy Ghost is sad. This soul has not faith, without which we cannot go to God, and she is losing grace. Beloved Sisters, this class concerns you not.

We now pass to the third class, and let us see its characteristics.

The souls that belong to this class wish not only to divert themselves of affection for creatures, but they wish it in such a manner that they have the dispositions of sacrificing everything to follow grace.

And so it is with those perfect souls in the spiritual order, who are bound to nothing, neither within nor without. They are prepared to accept, to leave, to take, to quit, as it is best for them, according to the will of God for His greater glory. They are really willing to burst through everything, to cast aside everything, in order to be divested wholly of self; they do not even reserve to themselves the desire of such or such a degree of love for God; so that by this disposition alone, which excludes all self-will, they ask for whatever is best. They leave everything, and then the Almighty creates a new mould, a new model of this soul, fashioned, so to speak, on self-denial and love for God. Beloved Sisters, this is what you should be. And we need not be troubled about impressions remaining to us against our will,—impressions are nothing, absolutely nothing. What makes man better, what makes him holy, is his will. When the will is given to God, and it chooses and embraces everything that tends to its perfection, it is the cross, humility, forgetfulness of self, sacrifice. All this is hard, very hard, but grace is all-powerful; be desirous of fulfilling the will of God; be desirous of destroying your repugnances, your imperfect affections, but only by will and not in imagination; then, hope. How could you be here at Carmel with the souvenirs of

your holy mother, and not make every sacrifice? Courage, courage, and we need much of it to pray and to hope.

Go, then, to the feet of our Lord, pray to Him, and say :—" Lord, I want nothing, I desire nothing, I want Thee only and Thy holy will ". Do you not think your prayer would be all-powerful? Offer up this prayer, then, all together united in charity ; it is impossible that you will not be heard :—" My God, I am weak, I have nothing, I can do nothing, I am miserable ; but I wish, I offer Thee my will, make it strong and noble ".

Advice.—You know it is not during prayer that you should make your election, that is to say, take your resolution ; it is during your free time that you should occupy yourselves with them. The four exercises here given have for their end our enlightenment, and the shining before our eyes of the Light, which is our Lord. It is likewise recommended whilst occupying all your free time with election, that you do not completely abstain from prayer during this period, lest God should give a grace, or a special light by which we should always profit.

SIXTH DAY (II.).

EXERCISE I.

OUR LORD WALKING UPON THE WATERS.

WE are always approaching our Lord, and in this meditation, Sisters, let us consider Him walking upon the waters.

You know that after withdrawing into the desert, and distributing the miraculous bread to the multitudes that followed Him, our Lord commands His disciples to enter the boat and to go before Him to the opposite shore, while He dismissed the people. Then He withdrew into a mountain, as he was frequently wont to do, to pray in solitude. The boat, however, was tossed by the waves in mid-ocean, and our Lord towards the fourth watch of the night went forth to His disciples, walking upon the waters. They on beholding Him on the sea were troubled, and they cried :—" It is a phantom ".

Our Lord approaches them, and they know Him not, and Jesus says in accents full of kindness :—"Fear not, it is I, fear not". Peter then asks if he may go to meet our Lord on the waters :—"Lord, if it be Thou, command me that I go to Thee". Our Lord says to him :—"Come". Peter alighting from the boat, walked over the waters to meet Jesus. Then there arose a great tempest on the sea, and Peter being frightened and about to sink, cried :—"Lord, save me". And Jesus held out His hand to him, and cried :—"Why hast thou doubted, O thou of little faith?" And in fine, by the Divine power there ensued a calm.

Then after picturing to ourselves our Lord in prayer, in which you will join Him, and subsequently working the miracle, ask of Him the grace, always the same, of knowing your Master intimately in order that you may learn to love Him, and follow in the spirit which He desires to give you.

First, consider our Lord in prayer on the mountain. What a prayer is that of our Lord's! who could understand it? Holy, sacred, Divine prayer! Yet we shall try to lisp something about it. Our Lord's prayer is a prayer of desire, a prayer of sacrifice, and a prayer of charity and goodness! A prayer of desire, as He Himself has said :—"I have a Baptism, wherewith I am to be baptised. And

how am I straitened, until it be accomplished." A prayer of desire, yea, of desire for the glory of God and the salvation of souls—the desire of their perfection; and you were present to Him, Sisters, in the desire of eternal beatitude. What desires are there, great God, in this contemplation of heavenly joys, in the divine heart of Jesus!

And you too, Sisters, whilst abandoning yourselves in your profound solitude to the life of prayer, should have great desires,—the immense desire of the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and the desire of sacrificing and immolating yourselves in so noble a cause.

Prayer of sacrifice is the immolation, the abandonment, and the devotion of self. Yes, we sacrifice ourselves for God and souls; labour, pain, fatigue, preaching, prolonged watches,—in nothing do we spare, in nothing do we hearken to ourselves.

Prayer of sacrifice! This should indeed be yours, beloved Sisters, it is the true, the better prayer. It is, perhaps, a prayer of union, but a prayer of union and sacrifice. In fine, a prayer of charity; Jesus remembers His Apostles, He knows well whither He has sent them, and why He has sent them,—His beloved Apostles. And He steers their barque through the tempest; He prays for them, and watches over them. And He knows well that we,

Sisters, shall likewise have disturbance and storms, but He watches over us. A prayer of charity and goodness, Sisters, is that of devout souls ; and this should be yours likewise.

Secondly,—We behold the Apostles alighting from the tempest-tossed barque. What are their dispositions? Fear, dread ; they tremble and pray not, although they should pray. And, Sisters, have we not often trembled? Has not our poor soul feared temptations and the devil? Oh ! we must never, never fear temptation. We must not fear it ; fear prays not, and we ought to pray. This was the one thing to be done in the barque,—to pray ; and once again the Apostles did it not, because they were afraid.

The fear which prevents us from praying, will prevent us also from knowing our Lord. The Apostles take Him for a phantom when He goes forth upon the waters to meet them ; they are frightened. When our soul is troubled by fear she does the same thing ; God comes to her and she knows Him not. “Delusion !” she murmurs, and troubles herself no further, instead of leaning her hopes on Him who manifests Himself unto her. Poor soul ! it is no delusion, it is the visit of the Divine Master ; He comes to enlighten and console you ; fear not.

Thirdly, and lastly,—We behold our Lord walking upon the waters by His divine power, and we hear Him say kindly :—“ It is I, fear not ; it is I, be not afraid ”. Sweet words, though scarcely sufficient, for His Apostles knew Him not, believed not. And the poor soul ? To her likewise our Lord says when He comes to visit her :—“ It is I, be not afraid ; it is I, fear not,” and she scarcely hears Him, so much is she disturbed and troubled. Then S. Peter cries :—“ Lord, if it be Thou, tell me to go to Thee on the waters ”. An indiscreet request perhaps, but our Lord in His great goodness answers :—“ Come ”. And behold S. Peter upon the waters. Then he grows frightened and is sinking ; this is what happens when there is fear. And our Lord says to him :—“ Thou art afraid, O man of little faith ”. He enters the barque with His Apostles, and there ensues a great calm.

And let us likewise, Sisters, enter the barque, and sit beside our Lord with deep devotion, imploring the grace of always going to Him fearlessly ; do you ask Him with lively, strong, and ardent faith the grace to dare everything and trust in Him alone. Courage ! let us walk upon the waters through the tempest. What matters the tempest ? It is like powerless rain falling on the roof-top when one is

in shelter. The tempest itself is nothing to a soul which belongs to Jesus Christ.

EXERCISE II.

MEDITATION ON THE TRANSFIGURATION.

Beloved Sisters, let us continue to contemplate the double person of our Lord in some of the mysteries of His life; it is in this contemplation that we are better enabled to study the will and the designs of God towards us. How I wish you to be to-day more than ever calm and recollected.

You will now contemplate the mystery of the transfiguration, and ask the grace of upright and pure intention devoted to the glory of God. You will then remember that our Lord took with Him Peter, James, and John, His most beloved disciples, and having led them into a high mountain, He was transfigured before them.

His face became brilliant as the sun, and His garments white as snow. At the same time they beheld Moses and Elias conversing with Him. Peter opening the colloquy, said to Jesus:—"Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us erect three taber-

nacles—one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias”. And behold, as he was speaking, a luminous cloud covered them, and at the same time there came from the cloud a voice from heaven speaking these words :—“This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased ; hear Him”. At these words the disciples, seized with terror, fell prostrate to the ground. But Jesus, approaching, touched them and said :—“Arise and fear not”. And when they arose they beheld Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, the Divine Master gave them this prohibition :—“Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man be risen from the dead”.

Following the most convenient method, and the manner which seems to you easiest, you can contemplate the persons, behold the facts, and hear the words.

And for the persons, it is always our beloved Saviour, destined for suffering and ignominy on this earth. He wishes, however, to give a momentary manifestation of His glory. He takes with Him Peter, James, and John—the same who, later on, were destined to be the witnesses of His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Thus it is that they who partake of His sufferings partake likewise of His glory. For so hath the Eternal Wisdom de-

creed in His divine counsels. And in considering Moses and Elias conversing so intimately with Him, let us return to ourselves. Have we tasted anything like this happiness in prayer? We may have for a few fleeting moments; but if we have not been initiated into this mystery of the transfiguration, if we have not the spiritual joys and consolation, if on the contrary we are reserved for torments and agony, let us nevertheless remember that we should always say:—"Lord, it is good to be here".

And for the facts of this mystery, let us first place ourselves in the mountain, and ask our Lord to give us His light with the intimate knowledge of His heart, to love Him the more, and to follow Him the nearer. Then we behold Him whom we so often see in humiliation and sorrow, in the full brilliancy of His splendour; and let us contemplate Him with faith and love, and say that one day we likewise shall behold Him face to face. Yes, Sisters, in some days or hours, on one condition however,—that we wait for the appointed time, and endure labour. Let us, then, humbly ask our Lord what could have been His thoughts, His motives, and the sentiments of His mind in this glory of Thabor. It was undoubtedly to elevate the still wavering faith of His disciples, and likewise ours. He vouchsafed to give us to understand this

mysterious union of ignominy and glory, and to tell us that Thabor and Calvary are one and the same, in a sense, since it is the same God who sanctified Thabor and Calvary. Therefore, we should bear in mind whatever temptations we may have to undergo, whatever consolations we may or may not have—in a word, whatever may be our condition, that God remains the same for us always, that He is always the Saviour, always great, good, mighty, and inclined unto us with an infinite love. Hence, whatever happens, we should always say:—"God is always the same; that is enough for me, I shall wait".

Then, Sisters, Jesus is transfigured; and we see from the witnesses which He was pleased to take with Him, that He manifested Himself to His disciples in all His glory and splendour to lead them subsequently to the Cross, and to prepare them to sacrifice and to immolate themselves. At first they did not understand this; it was only later on that they came to know it, according to the testimony given by S. Peter to increase his own faith and the faith of nations. And it is the truth, Sisters, that in this life of contemplation, in this assiduous labour after perfection, which is like the ascent of Calvary, you should always say that the joy of the transfiguration may indeed in this life be

sometimes given, but that it is short, very short; and that suffering is what we need to establish, and to lay the foundations of devotion and zeal within us. And here you will pause, and ask our Lord for the intimate grace of knowing Him, and following Him everywhere, if not to Thabor then to Calvary.

And for the words, we are told that our Lord conversed with Moses and Elias. Of this colloquy nothing has survived, nothing has been revealed to us; it is a secret. We may suppose that He conversed on the Old Law with Moses, who was its type, and on the New Law with the Prophet Elias, whom you so gloriously and so justly call your father. And in this colloquy we behold the unity of all time, because it unveils to us one only God, one only Saviour.

We likewise hear S. Peter, whose heart, ever burning with love for its Master, spoke in transports of joy:—"O Lord, it is well to be here; let us make, if it please Thee, three tabernacles—one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias". *It is well here*,—indeed, I believe so; S. Peter was not wrong. Let us stay here, and what for—to taste of joy? No, that is not enough; we must not be eager to preserve joy when it is given to us; we must not be eager to erect its dwelling here, but we must go farther off elsewhere. But are not you, Sisters, on

Thabor always in this beloved Carmel, and do you not say likewise :—"It is well to be here". Yea, and here you have pitched your tent for ever. Ah ! dwell therein and be happy whatever your state, whether you taste here the pleasures of the divine union, which are always easy and momentary, or whether you experience all the bitterness of Calvary.

And then we shall hear those words which came down from heaven :—" *This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased ; hear Him*". It is as if the Eternal Father were to say in answer to S. Peter :—"This is My Son ; He will tell you of the sacrifices to be made, of the labours to be endured, of the souls to be conquered ; hear Him, He is My beloved Son ; hear Him, and you need not seek consolation, nor rest, nor enjoyment for yourselves". And then the Apostles, seized with terror, fall on their faces to the ground. Our Lord after being stripped of His glory and returning to the condition in which He wished to live, in humility and poverty, approaches His Apostles, touches them, and speaks these consoling words :—" *Arise, fear not, it is I*". Beloved Sisters, these words are for us ; often does our Lord say :—" *Arise, fear not, it is I*". And when we have any resolutions to take, let us fear not, but be generous, and arise. The

life of Carmel is the life of charity, and charity does not pause. Oh, Sisters ! arise and go forth.

Then our Lord, always prudent, always discreet, recommends His disciples not to speak of what they had seen, because the hour was not yet at hand. And are there not times when activity and natural ardour make it necessary for us to be full? Take care, the time has not come, we must wait and act like the general charged with the plan of attack for the capture of a city; he waits and does not disclose his secret at his first coming. Neither should we; we must not speak of the graces and gifts of God, nor manifest them externally, but keep them secret in the depths of our heart in order that they may bear fruit (excepting always with those who are chosen by God to direct our souls; for then we must open ourselves with full and perfect confidence).

In conclusion, let us go to our Lord and ask Him, beloved Sisters, for the light to know His will, which chooses to make us in all perfection children of Carmel, and worthy followers of S. Theresa.

EXERCISE III.

CONSIDERATIONS ON ELECTION.

Beloved Sisters, it will be well to say a few words on election, that is, the resolutions or determinations which we may take; for in this are the spirit and results of the retreat always manifest. All souls that are in truth recollected in God, and seek only our Lord and perfection, have always something to do. We must never suppose that we are not to take resolutions when we cannot realise them—this would be an error; but we must take resolutions with truth, that is, with the means of accomplishing them. We shall say a few words on the matter, then on the manner, and finally, on the spirit of election.

And, first, as regards the matter, we must certainly find it in the needs of the soul; every soul has a special need, something bad to eradicate or correct, something good to perfect. Often, too, one single point, one single resolution is sufficient. Nevertheless, we may take several resolutions should necessity require. When we seek the weak point in our soul during retreat, it is well to ponder on the chief events of our life. First, we look at

poverty ; is this poverty so much to be loved, dear to me ? Do I love it as my mother ? Are there no researches, no deficiencies ? Do I observe chastity ? Am I devoted to it with great purity of heart and of intention ? Have I observed modesty, which is the surest safeguard against the attacks of the devil ? Have I nothing with which to reproach myself in the past ?

And obedience, holy obedience, in all its bearings ; obedience in act, obedience in thought, and obedience in will. Have I always renounced my own judgment, my own dislikes, my own excuses, and my own will ? Have I not some personal ideas animating me ? Are my actions based on the spirit of faith ? Do I behold God in my superiors ? Oh ! obedience is a great thing. And when we remember that it is the virtue which chiefly constitutes the religious life, how exactly, and with what importance, we should devote ourselves to its practice !

And the holy vows, the rule, and the constitutions ? Is the religious life with all its observances dear to me ? Am I faithful to it ? Do I not seek chance dispensations and exemptions ? Do I love them ? And if I have the humiliation to be submissive, do I continue to observe them ? Would I long for them at the expense of the common life, which is the true mortification and source of grace

in a religious community? Oh, Sisters! the common life! And, finally, beloved Sisters, in a cloistered life like yours how necessary that peace should reign by means of union and indulgence, because we all stand in need of charity and commiseration. Have I offended against charity? Have I practised it? Have I loved it? Have I had compassion and condescension? We should examine ourselves on these points, and ask to be made aware of our shortcomings in these respects if we know them not.

And how have I discharged my obligations with regard to prayer? Do I regard the life of prayer as the life of my soul? Do I apply myself to it? Do I seek to advance in it? Where am I in relation to it? Do I seek our Lord in prayer? What have I done during so many years that I am in religion? Have I always had patience and perseverance, so necessary on this thorny path, but so royal in holy prayer? Have I devoted myself to it in the spirit of my order?

Beloved Sisters, you see here there is subject for examination, and matter for determining all these points.

Secondly, as regards the manner of your election, there is not very much for you to say or to seek; yet it is well to remember that we are under the action of God, under the action of grace, and that we have

co-operated therewith with noble freedom. There are three kinds of divine action, and three manners of co-operating with them.

I. When God takes possession of a soul, He enlightens it and casts it down, and makes it see according to His will, as He cast down S. Paul on the Damascus road, and S. Matthew whom He drew spontaneously from His desk to follow in His train. There are always in this sudden light distinct characters which mark it with the seal of the divine action; hence, when it brings to the soul peace, strength, enlightenment, it is the Spirit of Truth that is its author, and we ought to follow it.

II. When God communicates to the soul much light and knowledge by means of the interior consolations and affection which He sends; then if this soul by the experience which she has had in the discernment of the spirit, recognises the character of true peace within her, she ought unhesitatingly devote herself to the will of God, since God had undoubtedly spoken.

III. But in the absence of the two first kinds of divine action what are we to do? It may happen that God does not operate sensibly in the soul. We must then seek Him in faith and employ the third manner of election. For this purpose the soul must be established in a peaceful disposition,

that is to say, she must not be troubled by divers spirits, and must be able to make free and tranquil use of her natural powers. The soul thus prepared faces her last end; therefore, question and examine yourselves, consult God in prayer, and then determine.

But, beloved Sisters, this is not all, the soul may happen to be in agitation and the troubles of temptation. A soul in this state of agitation can for the moment do nothing; she must wait because God is not in trouble. If not to-day it will be to-morrow, or in a few days, whenever it is the will of God. I do not say that we ought generally to disquiet ourselves about every impression of sensible things, which may be despised; but we must be perfectly calm when there is question of taking a resolution for the greater glory of God and our greater good.

We must therefore pray, beloved Sisters, and reflect likewise; we must abandon ourselves to the great desire of satisfying the heart of Jesus, and placing therein all our happiness.

Another excellent means of taking good resolutions is to stand in presence of death. "If I were to die," we should say to ourselves, "if I were to appear at the feet of my beloved Lord like a child of Carmel, what resolutions would I have taken

in this retreat?" The answer should comprise what we are bound to do.

We should likewise take to ourselves the remarks that we make, even in retreat, on others. We think of the faults of a Sister, and say :—"Oh ! if she only profited by such and such a lesson, by such and such an instruction !" Make the same reflection on yourself ; it may be more applicable to you than to the Sister whom you judge. Yea, the counsel which you give to another, you should take to yourself.

And when we have done all that in us lies to become recollected, and to acquire a knowledge of ourselves, without however succeeding, we must make an offering of ourselves. We must say to God :—"Behold me, O Lord, I am most wretched, but accept me, give me, and preserve in me the generous will to refuse Thee nothing".

And now there is no need to show the spirit which should guide us in this search after the Divine will.

What is needed is, the triumph of the supernatural spirit over the human. We should make it rule over everything in nature in order to render our choice wholly divine. All that is comprised in human thoughts and affections, all that is not for the greater glory of God, the salvation of souls, and

the following of my vocation, I despise and leave. For me there is no world, no earth. My Saviour is my all! The immolation of self for His sake, the life of faith, the supernatural life, the life of our Lord Jesus Christ is my all. And, Sisters, let us ask for this Divine life. And as there is within us always that which makes us cling to and establish ourselves on earth, we must ascend to higher stages, and there maintain ourselves by prayer and love of Jesus Christ.

And is it possible that after receiving all these graces we should not be faithful? We may embrace external objects and not possess that holy folly which leads us resolutely onward in our Lord's train.

But I shall not pause here. Come, Sisters, and let us advance with our Saviour and free ourselves from the sad yoke of our miseries, imperfections, and infidelities, casting our heart on high and far away—far away from self—towards our Lord. Yea, we must work the spoliation of self, and the giving up of self bit by bit; and all these things may be reduced to one—persevering prayer.

Go forth, then, and pray. Go to our Lord either on Thabor, or in the lowly bark calming the tempest. Pray likewise to Mary, and ask S. Theresa to protect and bless you. Then make

your election. This retreat is a grace which should not remain without fruit ; it should above all in you produce true love for our Lord. Wherefore, you will take your resolution, or the resolutions with which grace may inspire you, at the feet of this good Master.

EXERCISE IV.

MEDITATION ON THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS.

Sisters, among the acts of our Lord's public life we shall take the resurrection of Lazarus and make it the subject of our meditation.

You remember that when Lazarus fell sick the two sisters, Martha and Mary, sent to our Lord to say:—"Lord, He whom Thou lovest is sick". On hearing these tidings the Divine Master departs not, but tarries for two days. Then He sets out, and on the fourth day comes to Bethania. Lazarus was dead, and his sisters said:—"Lord, if Thou wert here, my brother had not been dead". And our Lord answered:—"Hast thou faith?" Then He repairs to the grave of Lazarus, and weeps over him, and, in fine, by His Divine power raises him from the dead:—"Lazarus, arise from the dead".

You will then place yourself in presence of our Lord, always so good and so generous, and ask Him that during this meditation all within you may tend to His glory. You will then picture to yourselves the road which leads to Bethania, and the house where He used love to find Himself ; and, in fine, the better to love Him, you will ask for the intimate knowledge of our Lord, raising Lazarus from the dead.

In this act of the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus manifests Himself in three characters,—Jesus, the Friend ; Jesus, the Master ; Jesus, the Saviour.

Let us first behold Jesus in the character of a Friend. Is it true that Jesus wishes to have friends? Yea ! the Gospel says so, and cites many of them,—S. John, Lazarus, Mary Magdalen, etc. Martha and Mary, seeing their brother sick, sent word to Jesus :—" Lord, He whom Thou lovest is sick ". They said no more because they knew the goodness of our Lord. And, Sisters, why need we say anything more? Is not His friendly heart made sufficiently aware of our wants by those words? Jesus is a wise and devoted Friend ; He is wise, He has an end, one end which He proposes unto Himself. To human understanding it seems here wonderful that Jesus does not set out immediately when Martha and Mary acquaint Him with their

brother's sickness ; but Jesus had other views ; He chose to make the miracle more remarkable, the lesson more powerful, the happiness more perfect. We are sometimes still more impatient than Martha and Mary ; we expect Him and He comes not, He does not heal. Then we easily suffer ourselves to fall into the belief that God does not love us, or hear us, which is, Sisters, a false and an heretical idea. He bides His time to do it all the better, He bides His time to give unto you your desire, He bides His time in order to do more. Ah ! if we only understood that when He delays to help us, it is for the greater good of our souls, as we are sure to profit by the delay. We should pray perseveringly at the feet of this good Master. The Scriptures frequently repeat to us :—"Wait for the Lord, support the Lord". Let us then remain at the feet of Jesus, and tell Him that we believe always in His love, His zeal, and His devotion for us.

Let us now, Sisters, study Jesus in the character of a Master. He came, and Lazarus was dead. Then Mary said to Him :—"Lord, if Thou wert here, my brother had not been dead". Our Lord hears this murmur, but is not angry at it ; He never grows angry ; He merely asks in the character of a master and a physician :—"Dost thou believe ?

I am the resurrection and the life. Hast thou faith ? ”

And as He asks the two sisters if they have faith, so does He ask likewise a soul that is in solitude and prayer with rebellious feelings. Our Lord also says :—“ Dost thou believe that I am the resurrection and the life ? ” And we, beloved Sisters, should make answer to our Lord :—“ Yes, I believe ”. And to believe is not to reason ; to believe is to cast ourselves into the water before our Divine Master, unhesitatingly, fearlessly, meekly. Do you suppose that Mary did not believe her Saviour, that she did not abandon herself with the utmost confidence to the Sacred Heart of Jesus ? Admirable lesson, and one calculated to afford us much instruction ; God expects the same confidence from us, in order that He may give ear to us, heal us, and restore us to life.

Behold now Jesus the Saviour, in His twofold character, which we must never separate from Him—that of compassion and goodness, and that of Almighty. What tenderness ! On seeing Lazarus dead, He weeps. A God to weep ! Yea, He weeps because He vouchsafes to weep ; for He is the Sovereign Master. He commands every feeling as often as He wishes to experience them, and experiences them only when it is His will. He

vouchsafes to shew us by those tears the compassion of His heart. And afterwards He prays. Our Lord always begins His work with prayer ; prayer is His life. Then He goes up to Lazarus, and by His divine words raises him from the dead. Oh ! beloved Sisters, I ask you, in the face of this fact, and considering the infinite goodness of our Saviour, if our hearts ought not to be penetrated with lively gratitude. How great is the goodness of God !

But we must bear in mind that it has always His almightiness as an agent ; this is repeated frequently in the prayers of the holy liturgy. Lord, Thou art good, because Thou art powerful. If we do not believe in this union of goodness and power, we shall only have half-strength, half-confidence, half-love ; we shall have only an imperfect idea of the Divine goodness. We must never separate these two characteristics of the infinite love of God for us ; and then we may hope for everything. If needs be to raise the dead to life, He will do it ; He expects from you one thing only—faith. Do you believe ? Oh ! then ask what you will, miracles if needs be, and He will work them for you. But He requires of you a sentiment of intimate confidence. Yea, there is need of faith above all things in souls that are called unto perfection. Why be afraid ?

Why be terrified at the aspect of our miseries? Does not our Lord keep us? What are obstacles and impediments to Him? Then have confidence, beloved Sisters, and wait; why are you afraid? Jesus our Saviour is eager for your welfare, your advancement, and your perfection. But ask and you shall receive. Have patience, we must know how to wait and hope.

Remain in silence at the feet of our Lord; He knows your wants, that is enough; we may perhaps represent our miseries to Him, pray, and importune Him; He does not answer yet; but confidence! yea, confidence! and wait, for the moment of grace will come.

SEVENTH DAY.

EXERCISE I.

MEDITATION ON THE AGONY OF OUR LORD.

BELOVED Sisters, it is now time that we occupy ourselves with the Passion of our Lord, and go first into the Garden of Olives. You remember that after the Last Supper, our Lord descended Mount Sion to repair to Gethsemane, passing by the torrent of Cedron. He took with Him three of His disciples, recommending them to watch and pray. But fear and terror seized them, and His soul became sorrowful, and He addressed a prayer unto His Father that the chalice of His Passion might pass from Him, but rendering Himself, at the same time, conformable to His Father's will; and He prolonged His prayer until He fell in agony, and there came forth upon His

body a bloody sweat which penetrated all His garments.

Picture to yourselves the road that leads to the Garden of Olives, and go into this garden, where you will find our Lord in solitude and darkness.

The grace to ask for is that which belongs to the contemplation of the Passion,—sorrow, the breaking of our heart with the broken heart of Jesus, the mingling of our tears with those of Jesus—tears which He shed for us by reason of the pain that was caused Him by our sins.

Then we must consider in this great mystery the persons, the words, and the acts.

First, who are the persons? The apostles of Thabor, who were privileged. Here we see the reason of the Transfiguration of which they were the eye-witnesses. The Divine Master vouchsafed by the spectacle of His glory to prepare them to see Him suffering, and to suffer themselves with Him, in order that with Him they may one day reign. According to the words of S. Paul:—“*If we suffer with Him in order that we may be glorified with Him*”: Si compatimur ut et conglorificemur. Let us unite these three considerations—the privileged apostles, Thabor, and Calvary, and draw from thence this conclusion, that we must suffer in order one day to enjoy.

Then you behold Jesus going afar off to pray, and prostrating Himself with His face against the ground in the darkness of the night. Jesus the Penitent is sad even unto death, and given up to fear and sorrow. What a martyrdom? But so He willed it; yea, He vouchsafed to guide His heart through all this anguish, all this cruel agony; He willed it. Then we behold on one side, as the prophet has said, angels of peace weeping bitterly; and on the other, Judas hatching his crime with the doctors of the law, the pharisees and the scribes, — what a company? And with which party are we, Sisters? Surely with the friends of Jesus; but are we of those who suffer our eyelids to grow heavy with slumber, and who sleep and pray not? or are we rather with the Victim watching, who is suffering and weeping? And let us always remember that Jesus suffers because it is His will to suffer, and let us add :—“Since He suffers, it is for me”.

Now let us hear the words. Our Lord, with His customary meekness, says to His disciples :—“Stay ye here and pray”. Then He goes afar off, and prostrating Himself, He offers a prayer, —a threefold prayer, the prayer of conflict, the prayer of sorrow, and the prayer of self-denial and sacrifice fulfilled. And first, the prayer of conflict :

—“*Let this chalice pass from me*”. The prayer of sorrow :—“*O my Father, if it be possible—*” (for one may ask anything of a father), “*O my Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from me*”. *My Father!* oh, truly this is a prayer of sorrow. In sorrow to whom would we address ourselves, if not to our father? When one is sad, one seeks consolation in the most devoted heart. Finally, the prayer of self-denial, and at the same time of sacrifice fulfilled :—“*Not my will, but Thine be done!*” *Not my will, but Thine!* Thine, for Thy glory, for the redemption of souls, for justice, for the salvation of the whole world. *Thy will be done.* What a prayer, what a lesson, what an example! And we likewise, Sisters, should be careful to repeat this prayer, and to place ourselves in this frame of mind, whatever the dispositions of our soul. What matter nature, our inclinations and dislikes, and the murmurs of sensuality; let us make this sacrifice to the cross, and accept the chalice.

Finally, let us behold the acts. Our Lord devotes Himself unto agony and death, *let it be*. He devotes Himself to His Father's glory; He devotes Himself to the salvation of souls; He accepts all, *let it be*. And it is a remarkable thing, as the Gospel says, that when our Lord was reduced to

agony—the agony which He vouchsafed—He prolonged His prayer. Yea, our Lord remains there in violent agony, and what does He do? He prolongs His prayer. What does He do whilst suffering the most sanguinary of conflicts? He prolongs His prayer. And that for you and for me. And what do we do? Do we prolong our prayer in the moments of our repugnance, our lassitude, and our conflicts? Do we prolong our prayer in the moments of our aridity and suffering? Our Lord prolonged His prayer to obtain for me the grace of strength and perseverance, so necessary for my vocation. Jesus not only accepted death as a sacrifice which He foresaw, but it is also true to say that He died beforehand. Had not His divinity supported Him, He would have died in the Garden of Olives; a bloody sweat poured out upon His limbs, and the earth was impregnated thereby. And why such suffering? It was all for us. And what do we do? Have we made any return for such great love? But, above all, what are we about to do? We are about to accept suffering, bitterness, lassitude, sacrifice, agony, and even death itself. Yea, I shall immolate myself by prolonging my pious exercises, and by lovingly repeating in union with the prayer of our Lord, the *fiat* of resignation and

sacrifice :—" *O my Father, not my will but Thine*".
 Yea, Sisters, we must pray exceedingly with Jesus when we suffer ; and whatever our troubles, we can never attain to the agony of our Lord.

In conclusion, Sisters, let us address ourselves to the heart of Jesus to obtain the grace of participating in His sorrow. Let us likewise pray to Mary, who wept and prayed alone in union with the Divine Son.

EXERCISE II.

MEDITATION ON THE PASSION.

We shall follow our Lord along the *Via Dolorosa*, not that there is question here of remembering the way of the cross, and the making the stations ; but we shall consider our Saviour ascending Calvary. And first, let us picture to ourselves the terrible night which He passed in the Garden of Olives ; then His appearance before Pilate ; and finally, let us behold Him marching along the *Via Dolorosa* to the consummation of His sacrifice.

Let us then ask for sorrow and participation in the sufferings of our Lord, and for the tears of

repentance. We shall then consider Jesus carrying His cross.

In this adorable spectacle we may fix on three points which shall be thoroughly understood by taking of them that which speaks best to the heart, and induces it to the love of the Divine Victim.

1. Jesus advances always. 2. He rises always. 3. However sad He be, He proceeds always.

I. He advances always. Solemn was the moment in which Jesus, for the salvation of the world, took the heavy cross and laid it on His shoulders satisfied and content. *Proposito gaudio sustinuit crucem*: "Having joy set before Him, He endured the cross"—His joy was to suffer voluntarily for us. You know what S. Paul has written on this subject; instead of the joy and glory which were offered Him, and which He might have chosen in order to work our redemption, He preferred the cross, He seized it. And do we likewise, Sisters, seize the cross every day with delight—the cross of the rule, the cross of love, the cross of the reform of our faults, the cross of the complete sacrifice of self, even to our innermost depths? Do we carry the cross? O Jesus, grant me the grace of carrying it with Thee, like Thee, by love of Thee.

He advances with His cross, and this cross is laden with the sins, the iniquities, and the ingrati-

tude of the world, but above all with the ingratitude and baseness of souls that were dearest to His heart. The sins, the fatigues, and the contempt which overpower Him, He beholds and bears. Oh ! let us from the bottom of our hearts compassionate His sufferings and His sorrow. He sets out, He advances, He ascends weary—yet He ascends always. For so He has said :—“ If anyone wishes to come after Me, if anyone wishes to partake of My glory and My crown, let him renounce himself, and take up his cross and follow Me”. We have nothing to do but to take up our cross and follow Jesus on the *Via Dolorosa*. There He appeared to you ; there He beholds you.

And do you likewise, Sisters, set out, and advance, and ascend, not with a half will, but with courage. Your Divine Saviour is advancing always; follow Him, and say :—“ It is for my sake that Thou dost bear the cross. Oh ! what shall I do to comfort and console Thee ? ”

II. Jesus falls, and thrice yields beneath the burden, but He rises always. Tradition points out to us our Lord's three falls. God falls to earth—what a mystery ! And He vouchsafes this weakness, this oppression ; He vouchsafes those falls, and His bodily infirmity. In this we find a remarkable lesson for our weakness. It was through compas-

sion for our infirmities that Jesus became weak, and halted, and fell. And alas ! Sisters, how many times have we fallen—after so many graces, and not beneath a stupendous weight !

Jesus makes an effort and rises. Let us ask of Him the grace of rising likewise. There is for us powerful help in our Lord's triple fall, because in all His acts, in all His sorrows, our Divine Saviour vouchsafed by teaching to make us capable of deserving grace. Hence whatever be our burthens, our languor, our aridity, or our repugnances, we must remember that we shall always find grace near Jesus falling under the cross—the grace of rising, and marching on always. What a consolation !

Not that we should be anxious to fall—oh ! no ; but we are so weak, so feeble, so inconstant. We pause and turn aside on the way which Jesus followed, but we shall arise by the help which His fall has earned for us. Let us at least always give this Divine Master who is so good to us, a tender sentiment of piety and compassion, and let us conceive a just indignation against ourselves which will give us energy to rise always and for ever.

III. Thus our Lord passes through every obstacle and proceeds always. But He meets by the way the most legitimate objects of His regard—His

Mother and the holy women. How hard was this trial to His Mother whom He loved so tenderly. He saw her, but made not even a movement to look at her, He spoke to her not a word, nor did He attempt to comfort Her ; she had no need of comfort. He never chose to give way to natural sensibility. Grace and spiritual love only—nothing for flesh and blood. The holy women, whom the sight of His sorrows caused to weep, had the consolation of hearing one sentence from the lips of their Redeemer :—“ *Weep not over Me, weep over yourselves*”. Jesus wills not compassion for Himself. Among all the testimonies of love on the part of His friends, Jesus thinks not of Himself ; His Father, the cross, and the salvation of souls are His only occupation, His only thought. Nothing for Himself. He to think of Himself ! Never. He is dead, He is the Penitent, the Victim. He thinks of nothing but of humbling Himself and suffering. Jesus never pleased Himself, and therefore the Eternal Father exalted Him, and used frequently to say that He was His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. There are souls that always please themselves, and that, while having the best intentions, think only of themselves. O Sisters, never think of yourselves. Then the words addressed to the holy women, you may take unto

yourselves. Yea, weep over yourselves, but above all over souls. Weep also over Jesus, but let your tears be the much-longed-for tears of loving compassion. It may be also a consoling reflection to you that the devout sex were there with Jesus ; the Gospel tells us that many women followed Him, but there is no mention of a single man. This is not much to our credit.

In fine, Jesus beneath His burden, in the midst of tears, the jeerings of the mob, insults, contempt, and injuries of every kind, ascends courageously and calmly ; nothing stops Him, He pushes on, He ascends always. Neither the buffets, nor the spits retard His progress ; there is here no sensibility, but all for the spiritual good of others. Do you also, beloved Sisters, set out, advance, and ascend. Something relating to the senses may befall you, a humiliation for aught I know. Answer it not, but, like Jesus, proceed onwards. Oh ! He is truly the Divine Hero, but He has done this and we should do it. S. Peter says :—“ *He hath marked out for us the way in order that we may follow it*”. Let us then put our steps on His steps, our marks on His marks, and let us walk behind Him and advance. And if there happen anything relating to the senses or the affections, any adverse passion, we must not pause, but always peaceably and constantly ascend

with Jesus Christ, and we shall with Him attain the goal.

EXERCISE III.

CONFERENCE ON MORTIFICATION.

Sisters, we are always at the Cross of Jesus Christ ; it is to us a book on which we could never sufficiently meditate ; it is for us, and particularly for you, the doctrine of truth and life.

One of the first lessons of the Divine Saviour whom we contemplate always carrying the cross is :—“ *He suffered because it was His will*”. He could be unwilling to suffer and save the world otherwise ; but it was His will to suffer in order to instruct us and move us to pity. The first conclusion to be drawn from this is very plain and simple :—“ *To imitate our Lord directly, we must devote ourselves to voluntary suffering, and suffer voluntarily*”. And if this be not perfection, it is at least the right way conducting thither.

Hence, in order to follow Jesus Christ carrying His cross, let us remember this precious principle which flows naturally from the mystery :—“ *We must suffer voluntarily*”.

And wherefore? Our Lord's Passion, a voluntary choice, indicates to us that there are reasons why we should suffer, and suffer voluntarily. Hence we should say to ourselves that there are reasons, and powerful reasons, which we ought to believe, even though we do not comprehend them; the sight of the cross is sufficient to ensure them unhesitating recognition in our minds.

But is there not also this manifest signification in the Cross of Jesus—that our Divine Saviour having chosen it for our redemption, by its means we likewise should co-operate in our redemption; and that in order to associate ourselves with Him, we have the utmost need of suffering? Hence, this is His own proposal:—“*If you wish to come after Me, take up My cross*”. In order to participate in His victory, we must partake of His labours.

But do we not know besides that we must always have suffering on this earth? If I do not accept and choose it, God will impose it on me, because there is always need of the cross; but I shall not then have entered into free participation in the suffering of Jesus Christ. Rather do I ask the will to suffer, and to mortify my flesh and senses; I ask to carry my cross, and when that cross comes to me, by others or by myself, I shall accept and love it. Therefore, Sisters, we perfectly comprehend the

teaching of faith, that, since our Lord has established this way of reparation, since He has chosen this manner of expiation, it should be ours likewise with the help of His grace, by the union of our hearts with His ; for of ourselves we can do nothing.

This, then, Sisters, is your life, your vocation. Go, and test the excellence of the way of the cross, the better way, or that which best realises the intentions of our Lord. You suffer for Him, you live for Him, you are willing to die for Him, do it well. Never refuse grace, never refuse the cross.

There is another consideration to which we shall attend more particularly, in the example of our Lord. Let us recall to mind the very remarkable words of S. Peter the Apostle. "*Jesus Christ suffered,*" he says, "*to leave us an example.*"

Now, I venture to ask if we can discover in the example of our Lord, apart from the expiation of our sins and the meritorious graces to be acquired by us, the reason of His voluntary suffering. It is this, Sisters. Jesus had to clothe us anew, and to remodel us. Order was not observed ; of this there are but too many traces in our souls. Disorder is the empire of the senses and of things natural and sensual. Yea, the empire, and the empire in such a way that the spirit is not its master.

That which rules us is flesh and blood, the animal instinct, imagination. Now I understand the words of S. Peter. When I take my Master's cross, and, united to my Saviour despite my weaknesses and infirmities, I embrace this divine cross, apply it to my flesh, and press it to my heart, there may indeed be some natural inclinations within me, but I am in order, I am the master, because I suffer voluntarily and freely as did my Divine Saviour. The flesh may indeed rebel, but only after the manner of a slave dragging at his fetters, and unable to break them.

Beloved Sisters, choose this suffering in practice ; there are inexpressible advantages in mortification ; there we again discover original justice, and portion of our primitive power which we regain like many of the saints, as S. Francis of Assisi, for instance, who exercised command over wild beasts, as did the first man in his state of innocence. In suffering and the cross is also found the very essence of all true virtue, purity, humility, patience, sacrifice, and love of our Lord.

In fine, mortification is the better prayer, it obtains grace. S. Bernard says, that we have two wings to fly ; two, because with one alone we could not fly ; and "those two wings," he says, "are prayer and mortification". That is to say, that

prayer with mortification is always heard. As to prayer without mortification, it may be good sometimes ; but it will be far less efficacious. This is hard on nature, but it is what our Lord loveth.

We must therefore, Sisters, follow our Divine Master's example in desiring mortification ; a desire, of course, which should be confined within proper limits—there should be no imprudence ; but we are naturally prone to live in the opposite direction. We have holy obedience always as our guide. But we must be careful to be exceedingly zealous in the practice of meekness and humility ; indifference for the cross of Jesus Christ is the evil of the religious soul.

And, in conclusion, in the lesson on which we have been meditating, let us also take in the motives of voluntary suffering, the motives of love for our Lord. You love our Divine Saviour, oh ! yea, you love Him, and you have proved it by consecrating yourselves to Him, since you are willing to live and die for Him. When, in presence of our Lord, I consider Him carrying His cross, overcome by fatigue, wounded, scourged, insulted, and I say to myself:—"That is all for me, because He loved me," is it possible that I would be unwilling to suffer, or could seek to avoid suffering, and pretend

to love my Master? I am deceiving myself, it is impossible.

The seal of divine love and the seal of perfection is love of suffering. Behold S. Theresa, truly did she love suffering; truly she suffered much. And all the saints likewise. Oh! Sisters, I humble myself in speaking thus to you, for it is easy to speak, but we must likewise know and thoroughly understand that there is no true love without sacrifice.

Oh! ask our Lord for love of sacrifice. We are on this earth only to glorify God by our immolation. Yea, Sisters, a humble, bruised, and crucified soul, a soul satisfied to die for God, a soul seeking self-denial, makes God triumph by her voluntary sufferings; she proclaims Him unto all things preferable and superior. On beholding Him, I cry:—"God is great. There is only one God whom we could love thus." We ought to do this, Sisters. And if we cannot offer to God the voluntary sacrifice of martyrdom, there is martyrdom every day and every moment—the martyrdom of mortification, rule, and obedience. Let us embrace this mortification with all our hearts, and let no limits to our desire to suffer, except those assigned by obedience.

You now understand, Sisters, something of what the Cross says to us. Whilst contemplating our Lord on the way of Calvary, go and ask Him for

this love of the Cross. And entreat Mary, *Mater Dolorosa*, to obtain for you the strength never to pause except before the barriers of obedience.

EXERCISE IV.

MEDITATION ON OUR LORD'S DEATH.

Beloved Sisters, let us assist this evening at the death of our Lord upon the cross. We shall briefly recapitulate the facts—our Lord on the *Via Dolorosa*, and subsequently on the cross, and the derision and mockery of the populace. We shall take our stand on Calvary with Mary and the holy women, to contemplate our expiring Saviour, and we shall ask for the grace to die spiritually with Him. You shall then pause at the three considerations of the death of Jesus Christ :—1. A sacrifice of reparation. 2. A Sacrifice of consummation. 3. A death of love.

I. A sacrifice of reparation. The death of Jesus Christ is the effect of sin. We, sinners, are the real authors of His agony and cruel death. *Per peccatum, mors*. Through sin, death. As fire consumes wood, so did our sins consume Jesus Christ. This is an article of Faith. We may therefore say

to ourselves that we are the characters taking part in His death, and that it was the voice of our iniquities which cried :—" *Crucify Him, crucify Him*". Then we shall better than ever understand the words of Jesus carrying His cross :—" *Weep not over Me, weep over yourselves*". Enter then, Sisters, into the innermost depths of your souls, and say with bitterness and compassion :—" It is true that Jesus alone reckoned, measured, and felt my sins and iniquities ; that is to say, He alone endured the torments which I deserved". Let us be penetrated with a profound sentiment of compassion for our Divine Lord. He offered Himself, He gave Himself up, He immolated Himself. What love ! Then He hath called us, and reckons us among His beloved friends. And what do we offer Him ? What have we done for Him ? Alas ! how often have we been guilty of coldness, indifference, forgetfulness, raillery, contempt ? What a return ! what ingratitude ! We must turn on ourselves, and despise ourselves, and be confounded. And then in our humiliation, let us unite ourselves to Mary and the holy women, and ask for participation in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, and for the tears of repentance and love.

II. The death of Jesus Christ is the consummation of sacrifice ; the reparation is consummated,

Jesus says to Himself. Our Lord is purified by reparation ; but that is not all, we must realise the words of S. Paul within us :—“ *I fulfil in my flesh what is wanting in me of the passion of Jesus Christ*”. And what is wanting in me? My suffering, my crucifixion, the participation of my whole being in this sacrifice, the entire oblation of myself. Oh ! Sisters, let us from this day henceforth die with Jesus Christ. I can do nothing, it is true ; but what a consolation ! We have said :—“ All is consummated ”. With this grace of consummation in Jesus Christ, I shall be enabled to fulfil every sacrifice. Courage, Sisters, courage, the last moment of consummation will come for us likewise. At the hour of death, or when in your thoughts you bring your last moments vividly before you, say with your seraphic mother :—“ I shall be judged by Him whom I have loved so much”. But this is not all ; our life should be consummated beforehand, for this is the work of a religious soul, but above all, of a Carmelite. United to Jesus the Victim, she should say with S. Paul :—“ *I die every day*”. O my God, take my life, accept my death, I receive the sentence of my destruction in expiation of my iniquities, for love of Thee. I offer it and abandon it to Thee ; Thy will be done. And thus, Sisters, let us live in such manner that on our last day we

may say with truth :—" My death is only the consummation of my sacrifice ".

III. The death of Jesus Christ is an act of pure love. Yea, Sisters, it is the supreme effort of love. It was not death that took Him out of life. He said Himself :—" *Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend My spirit* ". His soul gave itself up, abandoned itself, plucked itself out of life for us. What a mystery ! Could we thus die of love ? Oh ! let us ask for the grace to pour forth our last sigh in this divine charity. And remembering the bloody sweat, the fatigues, the wounds, the agony, and the ineffable sorrow of our Divine Saviour, let us say :—" Behold what love for His Father and His unworthy creatures brought forth in Jesus ! It was love which opened and rent His divine heart, for such was His will. Yea, before the wound from the lance He died of pure love for us." Before leaving the cross, remember the last sigh of the dying Victim, and offer Him your last sigh beforehand in union with His. Then be recollected ; and with Mary and the holy women endeavour, as far as in you lies, to die on Calvary ; yea, die and accept the sacrifice ; and remember with sorrow that it is you yourselves who have crucified Jesus Christ.

EIGHTH DAY.

EXERCISE I.

MEDITATION ON THE RESURRECTION.

N.B.—This lecture was delivered on the evening of the seventh day in anticipation.

BELOVED Sisters, to-morrow will be the last day of your retreat, and let us bless God for having given you so abundantly the graces of which you stood in need.

On this last day the exercises will be for a day of joy and rest, though always one of silence and recollection ; with these dispositions you will ask with faith and with an ardent desire the grace of peace and perfect love. You will likewise ask for the grace of resurrection which our Lord earned on His rising from the dead.

Go and meditate on this memorable fact, in order

to help you,—Jesus rising living and victorious from the grave. Think of the three days which He spent in the sepulchre, during which our Saviour's blessed soul descended into Limbo to visit, to console, and to rejoice with the souls of the patriarchs, prophets, and just men who were awaiting Him. Then at the first rising of the sun on that glorious day it returns in silence, without an eye-witness, to resume its place in our Lord's sacred body; and Jesus passing through the stone arises from the dead in full activity, and with all the characteristics of His glorified body. Behold the holy women at the sepulchre, and the angels seated at the entrance of the blessed monument.

Ask for the grace attached to the mystery of the resurrection, the grace of spiritual joy, whatever be the dispositions of your soul, her darkness, or aridity; yea, whatever they be, we must ask for spiritual joy, and then for the pure and noble love of Jesus, because He is glorious, mighty, and immortal; for His happiness, His triumph, and His glory is the object of your joy.

We shall consider, in the first place, the time of the resurrection—the beginning of the day, when the shades of night are on the point of fleeting, in solitude, silence, peace, without an eye-witness or a spectator, for the guards who were watching, and

watching well, perceived Him not. Thus it is that great things are done by God secretly, in obscurity and peace ; thus should we likewise accomplish the resurrection of a soul eager to rise with Jesus from the dead.

Secondly, we shall behold the manner in which this mystery is wrought ; the blessed soul of Jesus resumes its body, and infuses life therein ; it is no longer as it was on the day of His incarnation,—no longer for suffering ; His body is now immortal, subtile, and glorious ; He passes the stone, He has conquered, and we likewise with Him. Beloved Sisters, this is the practical reflection : Jesus Christ suffered for some days, and for nineteen centuries He rests. For us likewise there may be a few moments of suffering, but an eternity of rest. What comfort ! what hope ! The body of Jesus resumes life ; our Master is in joy and mightiness and power, He has passed the stone and triumphed. This is a remarkable day. If we love Him, and share in His sufferings, we likewise shall one day partake of His glory. Yea, O God. One day soon, Sisters, we shall be with Him. What a reflection !

But we know that we shall behold Him face to face, and contemplate Him, and partake in His triumphs later on in heaven ; to-day we must

love Him because He is beautiful, because He is good, because He is mighty, because He is the Conqueror. No longer will our Lord be overpowered with sorrows, insults, and ignominies; they are all over, that time is past, to-day He sits upon His throne.

Thirdly, Jesus risen from the dead gives tokens of His almightiness by the miracles which He works. He gives to all likewise marks of His goodness and His love. Behold how condescendingly He comforts Magdalen; He calls her by her name—Mary! To Peter He addresses not a word of reproach. Thus does Jesus risen from the dead operate in our hearts likewise; He is our Friend and Comforter. Let us love Him. Let us adore Him.

But we have said nothing of the apparition of Jesus to His blessed mother. Although the Gospel does not say so, we can easily imagine that Mary was the first to behold Him. Let us transport ourselves into her oratory; there alone in that sanctuary, whether she had withdrawn after watching by the sepulchre of her Son, she awaits His resurrection, and prays. Soon she beholds Him appearing with the souls of the just; she beholds Him beautiful, glorious, the Conqueror; she contemplates Him, admires Him, and rejoices. She

forgets herself entirely, because she knows that she would yet have to spend many years on earth; she thinks only of the triumph and happiness of Jesus. Oh! here is true devotion. The divine mother forgets herself. She beholds the deliverance of the patriarchs and prophets, and of all those who were in Limbo, and she rejoices in their happiness and forgets herself. Rising above herself, and above her sufferings, she does not murmur at being left behind; she devotes herself to the will of God, and rejoices in the salvation of souls and in the glory of her divine Son. Behold a lesson and an example for you.

We should therefore endeavour to rise above our difficulties, annoyances, and trials; we should learn to forget, and to hold ourselves aloof from them, and to remain in the oratory of our heart, and say:—"O my God, let my soul be made perfect and comforted in the hidden depths of Thy love". Jesus Christ has conquered and triumphs; He is our Saviour, our joy, our strength. Ask Him earnestly for the precious gift of spiritual joy; and learn always, even in the midst of trials, to rejoice with patience.

In concluding this meditation, it would be well to enter the oratory of Mary to pray with her, and there in silence, peace, and love, to rejoice

with her in God, and in God only, in complete forgetfulness of self.

EXERCISE II.

MEDITATION ON THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.

We must remember that, agreeably to the spirit of the last day of these exercises, you should earnestly ask of God the grace of pure spiritual joy, true joy,—that supernatural joy which springs from perfect love. Outside the time of retreat there will be other joys, and other hours for other desires and other virtues; but in contemplating the glory of our Lord to-day, we must endeavour to rejoice in Him and for Him, whatever vain thoughts may be passing within our minds.

You will then contemplate the Ascension of our Lord. You know that for forty days He appeared to His apostles frequently and manifested unto them all manner of goodness, power, and glory. Then after commanding them to remain at Jerusalem and there to await the Holy Spirit whom He promised them, He led them upon Mount Olivet,—and wherefore? You know, Sisters, that on this mount of suffering, He was about to

manifest His glory. On reaching this privileged mountain, He arose to heaven in presence of His disciples. In their astonishment, pausing with their eyes raised towards their Divine Master, Jesus disappeared. And angels came to tell them that they had other things to do, and that Jesus whom they beheld rising into heaven, would return one day in like manner.

Behold the fact, behold the history. When you are recollected peacefully in the superior part of your soul, picture to yourselves Mount Olivet where you will find the apostles and disciples with our Lord, and ask for the grace of the mystery. You can then behold the persons, hear the words, and assist at the performance of the mystery. And first to behold the persons.

What are the dispositions of the apostles and disciples? There is reason to be surprised at and long for them; they are still hesitating; there are even some who doubt; others ask:—“*When wilt Thou set up the kingdom of Israel?*” And Ascension Day finds them still at this point weak, feeble, and even wavering in their faith. What misery! But we must be surprised at nothing; these were only natural impressions; they had not yet received the Holy Ghost. We must pity them. And we, Sisters, in our vocation have still

ideas of the world, when we should rise above them,—we who have received the divine spirit of Jesus. But we must never be troubled, whatever our impressions. Impressions are nothing, they may be despised. We must not wonder at anything that happens to us despite our efforts. After being raised up and ravished, we may descend in a moment to infamy and the mere animal life,—but what matter !

And behold Jesus triumphant and immortal, gazing for the last time on this earth which He was about to leave, and bestowing a special blessing on the souls to Him most beloved. What should we do in sight of this strength, this goodness, and this glory of our beloved Saviour. We should raise ourselves up by forgetting self, and follow Him in desire to heaven, likening ourselves to a cast-off garment, and rejoicing in the Lord.

We shall now hear the words.

After blessing His apostles for the last time on earth, our Lord says to them :—"Withdraw and await the Holy Spirit". And this is what we should do, we should await the Holy Spirit ; He has His moments, He breathes wheresoever He wills. Let us always hold ourselves in readiness above all in prayer ; and let us long for Him earnestly and patiently. And the angels say to the astonished disciples :—*Men of Galilee, why do*

you pause and look ?" It was as if they said :—
 "Go, fight, labour, suffer, and advance. Jesus, whom you have seen ascending into heaven, will return in like manner on the last day." Here, then, we behold the end of all things, the General Judgment,—so much the better. And our Lord will appear to us in His glory. We shall behold our Friend, our Saviour. What happiness to have for a Judge one whom you have loved so much ! S. Theresa used to say :—" *I shall be judged by Him whom my heart loveth*". And this thought used to transport her with joy. But we must prepare for this by victory over self.

We now come to the performance of the mystery. Our Lord ascends into heaven from the Garden of Olives. It is then evident that suffering is followed by happiness and glory. The Divine Master has said so. And we read likewise in S. Paul :—" *If you have suffered, you shall be glorified*". The Garden of Olives leads to heaven ; it is the degree, the path, and in this manner did our Lord indicate to His disciples the route He had taken to rejoin them. Let us pause then, Sisters, on this beloved mountain of glory and sorrow, in peace and joy, renouncing all natural satisfaction, and awaiting our Lord only. And let us make an act of faith on the necessity of suffering. We shall make a

second act of faith on the triumph which the cross afforded Jesus Christ, and we shall say :—
“We likewise shall soon ascend into heaven”.
And God in His love hath placed us on this privileged way. Confidence, therefore, we shall suffer for His glory and His love, but not for ourselves,—no, for God, and for heaven which we love for Jesus’ sake. And heaven is God ; beatitude is the life of the happy God, the great God, the supremely perfect God. Let us endeavour to understand these things in order to free ourselves from the oppressive yoke of nature and our depraved inclinations ; all which are so much mud. Let us endeavour likewise to make here below a heaven of holy prayer and contemplation insomuch as the grace of so doing is bestowed on us, while we are waiting for our Lord Himself to come, and to set us in the places which He has destined for us. Let us ask our Immaculate Mother to obtain for us this grace, and likewise all others belonging to the contemplation of our Lord’s Ascension. She beheld not her Divine Son rising into heaven. Jesus was unwilling that she should be comforted ; He loved her and left her in suffering and long years of exile ; and eventually He destined her for heaven.

EXERCISE III.

CONFERENCE ON TRUE LOVE.

In order to prepare us for the close of the retreat, we must seek that which is the conclusion, the limit, and the consummation of all things.

And what is this last limit on which our soul is fixed? Surely we cannot doubt that it is Divine love; everything is summed up in that. But we must first endeavour to form an adequate notion of Divine love. Does it consist in affected sentimentality, or in the outward expression of what we inwardly experience in our souls? We have on this point the words of S. John, who gives us in answer :—" *We should love not in word, but in deed*". And our Lord Himself tells us :—" *Who-soever loveth Me keepeth My commandments*".

The love of God is not altogether, therefore, as we might suppose, in the dispositions or tenderness of the soul. These may form a portion of love, it is true, and may tend to the love of God, but it is not they that constitute it. There is need of deeds and actions pleasing to God; there is need of practising virtue even unto perfection. It is true love that makes us always, and in every-

thing, turn to God as our Sovereign Good. Beloved Sisters, earnestly ask for this love which is the true liberty of our souls; to ask for it is already to practise it.

Another simple principle is, that true love of God consists in the reciprocity or mutual interchange of love. God loves us, and His love does not consist in words; He makes everything, He gives everything,—His wisdom, power, goodness, light,—nay, even His very self.

What love! We should understand that while on the one hand God gives Himself to us, on the other we should give Him all that we have, and all that we are.

We may therefore justly say that the religious life is a true and most excellent act of Divine charity, since it consists in making to God the offering of all one's being.

Thus, to abandon one's heart and soul to the quest of God is to devote oneself in holy prayer to Divine charity, which is not enough; it should be followed by solid virtue, which is the gift of all that we are.

But what is the work of a soul that truly loves God, and is not satisfied with merely saying so? What is there in your life, for instance, to prove to God that you love Him? What is there to

manifest it to all your Sisters? Self-denial, for in this there is no deception. If you love God you cannot love yourself, you must hate yourself,—and I wish to call your attention to the full force of the term hating yourself,—for whoever hates self, renounces self, despises self, forgets self. Now, Sisters, you understand that God, who asks this perfection of the souls that He hath chosen, so willed that even in the essence of the religious life there should be excellent opportunities for the practice of self-denial in the holy vows. To-morrow you will renew those sacred vows, and those which yet remain unuttered will be united to them in the expression of their desires. And among those vows, so sacred, so great, so perfect, there is certainly one which is the perfect expression of the love of God, because it bears upon it, when practised faithfully, the most absolute self-denial, namely, the vow of obedience. And wherefore? Because when acting under obedience we lay aside our own tastes, inclinations, and desires; we may say:—“It is no longer I that live, and move, and have my being; I am dead to everything”. Why did your holy mother, and all founders of orders, so exalt and recommend obedience? Because it is the better way of perfection, and the true expression of sacrifice and love. We must obey unto death,

even unto the death of the cross. Everything is in obedience, because then we can say:—"I have given everything to God". We must be very careful not to neglect the practice of holy obedience, and to believe, for example, that in contemplating it we contemplate all that is perfect. The love of God in holy prayer is good; to love and cherish holy contemplation is likewise good. But prayer in a soul will not be true, nor good, nor holy, unless there may likewise be found humble, perfect, silent, unaccusing, un murmuring, unreasoning obedience; silence, above all things; above all things, doing and loving what is prescribed by even the simple wish of our superiors without asking wherefore, because God invites us. I adhere to everything that I am bidden by an act of faith, recognising and adoring in the orders of my superior, whoever he may be, the Divine will. There is no question of the person so commanding, of his qualities or virtues; I behold, I serve, and I obey but God alone. And this, Sisters, is the love of God and perfection, because the sacrifice is fulfilled.

And when we have seen many souls, do we not know by experience that obedience is the surest guarantee of advancement and perseverance? Thus when we wish to be informed of a soul that seems

but little recollected, little advanced in the ways of God, we ask :—"Is she obedient?" "Yes, perfectly." That is enough; that is the better way; and we have every hope for this soul, because she gives all to God by obedience. To love God we must put ourselves in communication with the source, and we shall reach this source by the canal of obedience. Hence, when I put myself entirely into the hands of my superiors and suffer myself to be led by them exteriorly and interiorly at any cost, I am in communication with the living waters of grace and divine charity. And Thou, Lord, hast said :—*Whoever heareth you heareth Me. Whoever followeth Me walketh not in darkness*". Our Lord vouchsafed that the perfection of His life should be obedience—" *He was submissive*". And to whom? To all His creatures, even those who insulted and spat upon Him. We should not ask wherefore according to the lights of human reason. Wherefore? Because Jesus loved. O Sisters, to love God more, love obedience exceedingly, set no limits to your love, obey not only in act, but submit your judgment likewise to obedience blindly, as the saints have done even to the extent of doing foolish things; but this is the folly of obedience, which is no other than the folly of the Cross, the folly of Divine love.

Above all things, avoid murmurs, reasoning, and opposition, all which are so displeasing to God. We say:—"But if I were to do something else! Such another means would be more convenient. They are recommending me to act contrary to rule." Avoid all that, Sisters. Renounce your own views and will, and obey calmly and gladly. You will then understand what the love of God is, and love it really.

Observe, Sisters, that as effects proceed from causes, sometimes, and reveal them, effects may also in their turn become causes; in this manner does a soul detached from self, and renouncing her own will in conformity with the vow of obedience, destroy the principle of natural life. God then comes into this soul to be her life; He dwells in her, and she reclines upon His bosom. Now, to live and breathe in God is to love Him, because love is the very life of God; a soul dwelling deep in the depths of God's life forgets everything to love Him only, and then how nobly obedience is rewarded!

What is now to be done? O Sisters, ask for the love of God, that excellent gift, ask for, press and entreat for this supernatural love with all humility; and this is what you should do. Charity is God. He alone can give it to us. When they sought to

bring our Lord into their hearts the days of His mortal life, they should ask Him :—"Come, O Lord". And we likewise should say :—"Come, O Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me whole ; do according to Thy will". And this evening and to-morrow, when renewing your vows at the close of the retreat, you must give up all, your thoughts, your love, your very selves ; and our Lord satisfied with the oblation, will answer it with the most abundant blessings.

EXERCISE IV.

MEDITATION ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

Beloved Sisters, we shall now bring this retreat to a close, thanking God from the bottom of our hearts.

We shall this evening again return to divine love, and you can ask yourselves once more, in holy prayer :—"What is divine love ? what is pure love ?" You will remember the two principles which we this morning established. 1. That love does not consist in words, or sensible consolation, but in deed. 2. That love consists in the reciprocal communication of all good.

Cast yourselves now at the feet of our Lord in presence of Mary, and the angels and saints who shall be the witnesses of your oblation. The grace to ask for, whatever your dispositions, is to thoroughly penetrate what God is for you, with the ardent desire of doing all that you do for love of Him.

We shall now for the practical conclusion to be drawn from the exercises pause at four very fruitful considerations, which the Holy Ghost dictated to the soldier of Manréze in the ever-memorable grotto where He disclosed to him such great things.

At the end of this long month of retreat, S. Ignatius says to himself:—"God gives, we must give; God is everywhere, He dwells in me, I must dwell in Him; God operates and acts in everything, I must operate in Him; God is the treasure and the centre of all perfection, I must place my treasure and centre my perfection in Him."

I. God gives, I must give. Yea, Sisters, God gives everything, we should likewise give everything. And here we should recall all the benefits which He has showered on us—creation, redemption, sanctification, tenderness, solicitude, indulgence for our miseries, and the holy vocation.

God gives, what has He not given? He gives His very Self, He identifies Himself with us by

every means of union, especially in the Blessed Eucharist and in prayer, which are both a participation in heavenly life. And what else must I do? I must also give up everything—organs, memory, intelligence, affections, will, sufferings, in a word, everything appertaining to self. I shall give myself up and sacrifice myself, and this oblation I shall make through obedience. I shall give myself up, and abandon my whole being. And lo! before God and Mary, before the whole court of heaven, I shall make my act of oblation with or without consolation, as well as I can, and as pleasing as possible to God, but I shall make it and make it fully.

II. God dwells everywhere: He is on earth, He bestows being and life all round, He dwells in me likewise, and especially in my soul, which He fills with the divine essence; He expands my intellect, enlivens my heart; there is nothing in me that does not come from God, and is not in Him and for Him. Let an ardent prayer then escape your heart:—"Give me, O my God, the grace to dwell in Thee, and to live always in Thee". Make this request lovingly; it is indeed the expression of full and perfect denial.

Behold likewise, Sisters, God dwelling in all creatures and giving them life; this is a sweet

thought, which makes us live the life of faith. And here again, Sisters, you must renew the oblation of yourselves, for this is the means of living without other attachment the life of immolation and the life of death in God and for God.

III. God operates and works in every creature and in myself by love. Everything comes from God; there is no good, no help that is not the action of God; all creatures are only so many instruments in His hands. And what does He not operate for His sanctification in the soul? And by what return are we to mark our appreciation of this benefit? What are we to do? You, Sisters, know well. We must act for God, and operate in Him. I have an imperfect thought, a human desire; I sacrifice them in order to abandon myself always and in all things to the practice of true virtue. Yea, Sisters, this is the return, the reciprocity of good, and the communion of works in true, and pure, and perfect love. Here too lie the fruits of the retreat. If, then, in a short time, this evening, or perhaps to-morrow, temptation returns and pursues us, let us despise it; it is nothing, it is not for us. Let us act in God and for God only. O my God, let me die and live for Thee and in Thee alone.

IV. Lastly, in considering things carefully, we may ask where is true love, that is to say, the centre

of all good and of all perfection, and the treasure of justice? Is it not in God and in God alone? Yea, God alone is good, alone is great, alone is holy; we must then rejoice in His beatitude and glory, and centre all our affections in Him. Let us ask Him in the language of prayer to shower down on us the abundance of His graces, which will detach us from creatures and from ourselves, and let us abandon ourselves to holy love, and say with S. Ignatius :—

“Take and receive, O Lord, my entire liberty; receive my memory, my intelligence, and my will. Thou didst give me all that I am, and all that I have, and to Thee I return it; I devote it to Thy good pleasure. The only thing that I ask of Thee is Thy love; if I obtain this, I am rich enough and desire nothing more.”

And thus, on this evening, beloved Sisters, you shall close the retreat in peace and silence, and tomorrow finding yourselves again together, be faithful, and let your conversation be such that one may easily perceive that the Spirit of God hath penetrated you.

REFLECTIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS.

PEACE ON THE CROSS.

AN INSTRUCTION GIVEN AT THE END OF LENT,
1857.

BELOVED Sisters, what ought we meditate and speak on during this season of the Passion, in order to prepare ourselves for Holy Week? There is but one thing that should be present to our thoughts and feelings—namely, the cross; and it is on this point that I wish to give you a token which shall be as a motto. That motto is—*Peace on the cross*. We must not say, nor would you, I am sure, wish to say, *Peace without the cross*; we must not say this, because it is contrary to the will of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ willed not for Himself, *Peace without the cross*. Thus the resemblance is complete, and it is only imitating our Lord and expressing His own sentiment when we say—*Peace on the cross*.

For you know well, beloved Sisters, that our Lord enjoyed peace in the midst of insults, blasphemies, and the most grievous torments; and to say that He did not enjoy peace would be blasphemy. He

enjoyed peace, and—ponder well over this mystery—His soul, united from the time of His incarnation to the Word, enjoyed the beatific vision, even as His humanity enjoyeth it since the Ascension in the bosom of His Father in Heaven. Our Lord Jesus Christ enjoyed beatitude to its highest degree in the superior part of His soul. This beatitude He never lost for an instant ; and He was in the enjoyment thereof while He was suffering the most grievous torments, receiving the most outrageous insults, and experiencing the bitterest sorrow.

Therefore, *Peace on the cross.*

But how shall we obtain it? Can we groan and wring our hands, weeping and wailing, and suffer as did our Lord, and still enjoy peace? Yea, we can. But how? It is said that it is better to do things than to know the laws of things, and that is true; yet we must acknowledge that definitions are of great assistance. Let us then see what is this law of suffering in peace. How can we preserve peace on the cross?

I. By considering the necessity of suffering. We acknowledge this in theory, but are we willing to fulfil it in practice? Alas! we are weak and oftentimes draw back, for Nature is not dead within us, and she cannot endure suffering. It is only grace that loves suffering and enables us in those moments

to say to our souls :—" My soul, thou must suffer, thou must suffer ".

" But am I always to suffer," crieth out our self-love. " I cannot endure that ; it is opposed to my happiness and comfort." Yea, my soul, thou must suffer. Thou must bear the cross, and that cross cannot be of thine own choosing ; thou must only bear it up when it is given to thee. It will come of itself some time or another, for in some way or other we all must suffer ; and this obligation our Lord Himself imposeth on us, when He says :—" If any one will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me". And again, " Christ had to suffer," of His own will, no doubt, for He had perfect liberty of will, even as we. Now, to wish for the cross in one way and not to wish for it in another, is to wish for the one and to repel the other, and indicates a failing in the observance of the law of suffering. Therefore, we must suffer ; and whether we be tried by men, by sorrow, or by any other cause, let us say within us :—" My soul, thou must suffer " ; and then let us rest and suffer in peace. Suppose a sick man whose leg has to be amputated ; he undergoes the torture, and accepts it with resignation, because it is necessary. Is not this a means of enjoying peace rather than suffering at his lot ? This sick man is our model ; a cross is before us, and let us

shut our eyes, stretch ourselves on it, and be nailed thereto. It is God who crucifies me—be His holy name for ever blessed.

II. Hope is the greatest need of our soul ; hence, the cross is her greatest good and securest repose. The greatest need of a religious soul is to resemble Jesus Christ ; on this lies the foundation of all her hopes. Would this need be satisfied if we had nothing to suffer either spiritually or corporally ? Our Lord Jesus Christ carried the cross, and surely we have need to practise virtue for our greater merit, in order that we may approach nearer unto the heart of our Lord. And there is no virtue that we could practise without the cross. Where would patience be without the cross ? Patience is synonymous with the cross. We know, alas ! that we have passed long years in the ministry ; but to have suffered is the best secret for raising a despairing soul, and helping her advantageously.

III. Finally, we require to be purified. Now, the cross is needful for our purification ; for suffering is the only means by which we can be purified. The cross then is a necessity. It is the inseparable complement of our existence and the source of our most solid virtues. We need the cross to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ. The cross is a necessity, and I speak of the cross that is actually present to

us; for that is no cross which exists only in imagination. When, therefore, the cross presents itself to us, let us say to ourselves that it is necessary, and resign ourselves to submit to it and bear it.

Oh! if there be a sight that is agreeable unto God and His angels, it is that of a soul meek and submissive under crosses and humiliations; for this is the image of Jesus Christ, and the part He hath chosen. But for Himself He vouchsafed unmeasurable sorrow; while for you He diminished it from the infinite. *Peace on the cross* is a mystery, but the mystery of a profound truth. Teach me to know, O my God, how to suffer peacefully and lovingly as did my Saviour!

Therefore, the cross is a necessity.

And what more remains to be said, beloved Sisters, on this subject? Only that which we should keep repeating to ourselves incessantly, that the cross is good, and that it comprehends and embraces within itself all the goods and pleasures of this earth. Meekness, joy, and rest are in the cross that is accepted; for immortification brings nought but sadness in its train. If you suffer, accept the cross, take it, and you will be happy. And what would you that the world would do to a soul that has thus stripped herself for sacrifice? It will flee from her. And what would you that God would

do to a soul that is thus crucified? He makes her another with Him, another Jesus, another victim. In her He beholdeth His Son, and His Son's cross and peace. For He loves her; and then the crucified soul, if she be brave, is happy and holy, for herein lies all perfection in the cross and *peace on the cross*.

And then it comes to pass that we hate sensual gratification, and despise worldly pleasures. S. Theresa used to think herself unfortunate when she was not suffering, and used to cry: "O mystery of suffering thus accepted! True mystery, because it is an overthrow of nature, to rest peaceful on the cross, and there to slumber and abandon one's self as a vessel of whom God is the sole pilot, to cut the cables, weigh anchor, and set sail from earth, with nothing save the heavens over the deep!"

Such is the mystery of *peace on the cross*.

Then, courage, Sisters, and let us take up the cross during this holy season while you are going to dwell in contemplation on the Passion, scourging and insults offered to Jesus Christ. Say unto Him: "Yea, Lord, I will rest with Thee on the cross; and I will stretch myself peacefully thereon. I will suffer it to penetrate into my innermost bowels. Even though thou wilt abandon me, repel me, or crush me, still I will remain." How do we know

but a religious may find herein an heroic act in the interior life ; great suffering or a great sacrifice to be embraced. And if God so wills, you must undergo it, and undergo it fully. For the more closely you press the cross of your Master to your heart, the greater will be the measure of peace vouchsafed to you while waiting for eternity.

DISCOURSE ON SPIRITUAL JOY.

IN Scripture we often find a text that might with advantage be applied to the spiritual life in its inward progress. Such a text is calculated to excite spiritual joy within us. S. Paul forcibly repeats to us :—" Rejoice ye in the Lord". And applying these words to himself, he cries :—" I superabound with joy in the midst of tribulation". When our Lord was quitting this earth, He told His disciples unto the end of time, and especially those souls that were so intimately united to Him :—" I go to My Father, but I will pray for you, and I will send you My Spirit that My joy may be full and perfect in you".

But what is spiritual joy? It is an independent condition of our sensible being, and independent, moreover, of all sufferings. This joy, which should always exist in a faithful soul, establishes it in a perfect contentment that is superior to any impressions from without. Yea, truly we may say this joy is perfection. He who possesses it rejoices always in God with contentment of spirit, pure and unchangeable, in union with the Divine joy. In this state was our Lord's soul in the midst of the most

grievous torments of His Passion, ever enjoying the beatific vision—a mystery, still a reality.

We must remember that in our soul there lies a faculty to which the grace of God grants joy and peace, independently of the most sorrowing sensations. This joy is no sensible consolation or contentment caused by external objects. It is a joy in God who comes and dwells in the soul, independently of the sensations created by the devil, the world, and the flesh within us. This joy consists, moreover, in being always content in God. How can we think ill of the will of the God of Goodness, the Incarnation of Wisdom? Now, everything comes from God; therefore, everything is good; and, therefore, we ought to rejoice in everything, for joy is the contentment of good. May my soul, O God, be ever content in Thee!

There are times when we must be content against our will, and struggle energetically against all the evil inclinations of our nature, in order that, come what may, our spirit united to the Spirit of God, may rest in Him and enjoy contentment. Behold the joy manifested by our Lord in the Garden of Olives, by Mary on Calvary, by the martyrs in the midst of their torments! It is an error to imagine that spiritual joy is incompatible with sensible sorrow; for a soul united to God suffers when she

suffereth not. Let us ardently desire this treasure, ask for it unceasingly, and pursue it with all the strength of our soul. Yea, it is truly a treasure, which can have no other first principle than grace ; for, if there is anything supernatural in the world, it is spiritual joy in the midst of suffering. Our Lord vouchsafed to give it to us with His spirit. Let us ask it of Him, and seek it every moment of the day ; and every morning let one of our first prayers be a claim for this gift on Heaven. O my God ! grant me to be always content in Thee. Yea, Sisters, if at the first moments of the day—when, so to speak, we resume life anew—a religious soul breathed forth this prayer to God, with the *Laudate* to bless her actions and sufferings during the day, what progress would she not make in thus abandoning herself to Providence ? Such a soul would advance rapidly in perfection, and would soon acquire spiritual joy, which is the source of peace and happiness—the symbol of the Divine union. Therefore, we must in all things be content. This is no easy task ; nay, sometimes it must seem to us impossible. I know it is not pleasant to be on a bed of suffering for a month or two ;* yet there one has to lie powerless, helpless, plunged in

* Père de Ravignan had only just recovered from a three months' illness.

physical, and sometimes overcome by moral weakness. Human nature revolts against it—what matter? suffering is very good, and we must be content despite all things—despite even ourselves.

This joy is the better mortification, the better denial of self, because we are eager to be content in self and for self, whilst thus we lay ourselves open to rejoice in God and for God.

But to obtain spiritual joy we must co-operate with grace; it is not merely enough to lie in wait for it from heaven as for one of those rays of light and consolation which, from time to time, descend into our soul; for this is a solid virtue which must be acquired by a thorough co-operation of our will. In our habits of life, we should resolve to be content despite everything. Yea, O my God, I believe that Thou art good and merciful; and I will believe so, notwithstanding the murmurings and revoltings of my weak flesh! Whether we are subject to distractions or not, we should pray; and then rising, we should abandon ourselves to spiritual joy, any sorrows or trials whatever notwithstanding.

Let us then ask of God this supereminent grace of spiritual joy. Let us ask it unceasingly; and let our whole life be one continual petition for this grace. Let us also have the constant dispositions to acquire it, and think that we are in the better

state because we are in that in which God has put us.

As to practice, God will teach us this Himself; yet we may help ourselves with the counsels and the example of the saints.

One of the most important things in the interior life of a religious is to take up arms in self-defence, and unmindful of what is to the rear, to dash to the front like the driver in the chariot-race. "Go forth to battle," says S. Paul, "by patience." But to go forth we must make a motion, cast ourselves in front, and swoop down upon the foe. And it is likewise with the interior life. Go forth, then, by patience, and gird yourselves beforehand for struggles in suffering—and wherefore? Because God so wills, and because it is He who calls you, urges you, sustains you, waits for you. Go forth then courageously. Do you hesitate, or resist, or look behind? Take care, lest you fall into the clutches of the devil.

But what are the obstacles to spiritual joy and to our spiritual advancement? The most dangerous is the facility and multiplicity of our reasonings and fallings-back with ourselves, which is a detestable habit, and can only draw evil upon us. The greatest weaknesses result from these multiplied reflexions on ourselves; but if, on the other hand, we cast

aside all the promptings of self-love, and turn our heart, howsoever stricken, to prayer, rejecting every distrustful thought or multiple idea, and resting only in God, we shall find in Him spiritual joy, and any other line of conduct on our part would be offensive to Him. Let us go forth to the front, and become foolish that we may become wise. A fool reasons not. "The less you reason," says Fénelon, "the more will you be reasonable." We must incline our soul to this joy in order to attain the life of prayer—that life which should be the end of our every effort. It is impossible not to think and not to wish ; but when perceiving ourselves falling back into self-scrutiny or useless thoughts and desires, we must immediately and constantly change the acts of our soul in prayer. A Carmelite should, so to say, be transformed in prayer, be a living prayer. Yea, she should rise incessantly like the smoke of incense ascending unto God, or like the angels ascending and descending uninterruptedly the mysterious ladder. This will prevent no necessary occupation—only an abuse of our own spirit. And it will obtain for us spiritual joy.

Let us now turn towards God and towards the cross of our Saviour, and say :—"All is well. We belong to this world no longer, we are dead ; and we can only resume true life in spiritual joy."

CONSIDERATIONS

Extracted from a Profession Sermon, preached Tuesday, April 14, 1857, on the following text :—“*Æmulamini charismata meliora, quærite quæ sunt meliora.*”—2 Cor. xii.

WHAT are those better gifts which a daughter of S. Theresa comes to find in Carmel? I can express them in four sentences.

First, a better life, the life of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, better gifts, the gifts of heaven.

Thirdly, the better affections which lead us the more to love through the religious life.

Finally, a higher and a nobler freedom, where we obey only God alone.

I. What is this better life? It is that of Jesus Christ—the life of poverty, crucifixion, and sacrifice which He embraced for the glory of His Father and the salvation of souls; the life which you, beloved Sisters, have chosen. When the intimate love of Jesus Christ has touched a soul, every barrier must fall and every obstacle vanish, while she walks step by step on the footprints of our Saviour. The Apostle who followed Him most closely cried:—“He suffered in order that we might imitate Him and

walk after Him". This is the better life—to imitate our Saviour by love. O Saviour! Thou hast chosen this part and vouchsafed it also to be mine. Hither did I feel myself drawn by an inspiration of Thy grace, and when I understood the price of a soul and the honour of bearing a cross with Thee, and perceived the value of suffering endured after Thine example, should I be the one to recoil therefrom and leave Thee in sadness all alone? Oh! no. Behold then, beloved daughter, what you have understood, and heard, and chosen—the life of your Master in preference to worldly cares and virtues. Then be brave and shrink not. God will know well how to recompense what the world calls your sacrifice, and what you term your happiness and your glory.

II. Then better than the world's gifts are the interior life—the hidden life in God with Jesus, a life of prayer wherein the soul converses with God in solitude.

There are immense degrees in this life of prayer and meditation. S. Theresa understood them and went through them all. She ascended them even to the utmost limit. Would that we likewise could traverse them to unite ourselves to the same God!

In our familiar intercourse with God we have too often an importunate companion in the interior

activity which presses us on ; we think, we call, we seek, we labour ; this is the spirit which S. Theresa calls *bavard*, or that multiplicity of intellectual acts which she terms drawing water from the well. But there is another habitation which S. Theresa compares to a well-tilled field, watered by rains softly falling down from heaven, which render it fruitful without an effort ; that is to say, in the uniformity of this life of silence and prayer, in the even changes of day and night, the soul ends by freeing herself from the medley of reflections that are burthening her ; and it is only then that a great void is created within her wherein she rests in perfect peace. But the flesh shudders at this repose, and the soul must repel those inclinations, and boldly combat the promptings of weak nature ; for truly great is the courage needed to imbue the soul with such a devotional spirit that God in fine vouchsafes to rise like a solitary star in the midst of the loving and respectful silence that reigns within her.

O child of Carmel, follow the example of your mother, and escape the abyss. Go into the desert and meet night boldly. Seek and you shall find God. Give yourselves up to Him, and thus you will obtain for souls and also for our ministry the blessings and grace of which I stand so much in need. Is it possible He will not hear you, or refuse

you anything when you have refused Him nothing ? Break from all that may still keep you from Him. Another land awaits you. You are dead and crucified to the world ; forget all, and break from all ; and then you shall find a far better life, because then you will live alone with God.

III. And of better affections. Alas ! you, ladies,* know better than I do that there is always at bottom of all worldly affections a mixture of trouble, and that never in the interchange of natural friendship have you met with the fulness of rest in your soul. God forbid that I should condemn that which He Himself implanted in your hearts ; nevertheless, I venture to say to you that in the world you cannot, even in your holiest affections—and I take those which are the purest and most lawful of all your affections, the affections of the domestic hearth, a mother's love for her children—love, for you know not how to love.

You neglect no opportunity to give your children a brilliant education, and to procure for them a brilliant future in the world. But do you ever ask them if their eternal salvation is compromised, or if sin rests on their soul thereby ? Oh ! what weakness do you too often show in this respect ! No,

- * Père de Ravignan here addressed himself to the secular ladies assisting at the ceremony.

you know not how to love. Do you fear the maladies of the soul as much as the maladies of the body for your children? Yet, a mother's love consists solely in affection before God for the salvation of her children. You remember the Christian queen and mother who used to say to her son : " My son, I would rather see you dead than guilty of one mortal sin ". The value of our affections, therefore, lies in referring them to God. Nor do I fear to say that it is in the religious life that we know how to love best, for these holy souls are continually immolating themselves to God for those who are left in the desert, with the sole desire of devoting themselves to the work of their sanctification ; and it is with the view of our salvation that God adorned the world, created the firmament, and sent His Son to suffer on the cross. It was not for worldly honours that Jesus Christ suffered and died ; but for the eternal salvation of souls. And so in like manner God does not call a novice to Carmel nor immolate Himself upon the cross except for His glory and the salvation of His creatures.

Picture to yourselves for a moment the number of souls, who, despising the most sacred duties, fetter themselves through life with the chains of sin ; then pause and contemplate the others that take the place of the former souls as devoted victims like

Jesus Christ between heaven and earth ; and will you say to yourselves that these are not the better affections ? Yea, this is to love as God loved, by the cross and sacrifice.

IV. Finally, Sister, you are about to enter behind the grating, and this door will soon close upon you as your tomb on earth. And what do this cloister and this grating say to you ? They tell you that this moment you have entered into the holy freedom of the children of God, and that you have gained your liberty. In the world are the chains and yoke we have to bear while we are the slaves of our own tastes, habits, and passions,—of worldly customs, habits, opinions, and requirements ; but in the religious life we are free, nothing weighs upon us. In this life of religion which ought to regulate the simplest actions of our life, O Lord, Thee alone do I behold. The soul is freed from the world ; delivered from her most heavy burden,—from herself and her desires. These she has placed in God alone. This privileged soul do Thou, O God, bear in Thine arms. Authority speaks by the mouth of the superior, but it is Thou that directest it, it is Thy voice I hear ; no longer do I obey myself ; I am free !

Behold, then, this life of freedom and the better liberty. To obey is to be free. It is a mystery and

a miracle. To everyone it is not given to know and to taste of these things; but when once we understand all the happiness and peace there lying, there shall be nothing more but hymns of thanksgiving.'

THE APOSTLESHIP OF CARMEL.

GOD hath taken you from the midst of the world and separated you therefrom ; be ye always devoted unto Him. The world is egotistical, seeking nought but self ; but be ye apostles, seeking for souls, as divers seek in the depths of the ocean for the priceless pearl, and plunging into the fountains of divine justice to save them. When there occurs to you a zealous thought which brings you into intimate union with the heart of Jesus, treasure it, and answer to it in order that God may be glorified, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ perpetuated in its fulness, and your own merits increased in eternity.

A purified soul rises like a sunbeam even to the throne of the incarnate light ; sometimes indeed it may be enveloped in obscuring clouds, for as long as we are on this earth we cannot behold God face to face : but they are clouds which only conceal His beauty, without interrupting our union with Him or our love.

REFLECTIONS FOR TIME OF SICKNESS AND SUFFERING.

WHAT is that affection of the soul, that interior disposition which comprehends, or at least supplies all others—the disposition to which our Lord, by one of the greatest miracles of His grace, frequently inclines the sick man, and which seems to be the sufferer's sole petition to God ?

To be content in God, and in Him to rejoice over all things—over the sufferings He sends, the pain or uncertainty in which He leaves us, as well as over the health He has given us and the consolations He has poured down on us—in a word, to be resigned to and content in God with blind filial devotion and love.

To throw the past and its bitter memories into the infinite fountain of God's pardon and mercy, and to have no fear or preoccupation for the present or the future, is the result of peace and joy in faith ; is to die with pleasure and live submissive, happy and devoted ; is that which is most agreeable to the heart of Jesus.

Interior sorrow, bitter pains, or even physical and moral weakness, long fits of insomnia, all are

lost and forgotten in the attitude of filial devotion and love, in the supernatural grace of perfect contentment vouchsafed to the soul, in order that she may approve and accept all that God wills and does.

O God, my Saviour, give me and preserve me always in this perfect contentment, in order that I may thereby live in Thee ; *ego in te et tu in me*, I in Thee and Thou in me.

